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ABSTRACT

Seven papers delivered at the 1992 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions annual meeting relating to regional activities are presented. These papers deal with library issues in Africa, Asia and Oceania, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The papers are: (1) "Designing National Information Policies in African: Process and Outputs" (K. J. Mchombu and K. Miti); (2) "Coordinating Documentation and Information: The Experience of Morocco. The Documentation and Information Sector: Its Nature and Particularities" (L. Battiwa); (3) "The Role of University Libraries in Establishing National Policies for Library and Information Services" (A. S. Chaudhry); (4) "The Role of the USP (University of the South Pacific) Library in Meeting the Information Needs of the South Pacific Region" (A. Rizio and J. Mamtora); (5) "The Information Needs of the Librarians of Developing Countries and the Palisades They Encounter in Obtaining These Information" (P. Perera); (6) "Public Libraries in the Framework of the Latin American and Caribbean Libraries Association" (M. E. Zapata); and (7) "Networks of Specialized Information Services in Latin America" (E. M. R. de Carvalho, I. Talamo). (SLD)

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DESIGNING NATIONAL INFORMATION POLICIES IN AFRICA: Process and Outputs

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DESIGNING NATIONAL INFORMATION POLICIES IN AFRICA: Process and outputs.

K. J. Mchombu+ & K. Miti*

Abstract:

The paper reviews the experiences of information professionals in Eastern and Southern Africa in formulating national information policies. It is concluded that the outcome to these efforts has been minimal. A number of constraints are identified eg. narrow definition of information, lack of policy evaluation, and inability to tackle sensitive issues. A fresh start on African thinking is proposed based on a different approach which starts with asking the basic question - if a national information policy is the answer what is the question? Such self-questioning will clarify objectives and pinpoint expected outputs. Better strategies are needed to elevate information issues from a private concern of information workers to a social/public concern which deserves a place in the public policy making agenda.

Introduction.

The question of national information policies in Africa, and other Third World Countries is not new. It came to the forefront in the early 70's as an aspect of UNESCO's NATIS, UNISIST, and GIP programmes. A good 18 years later, and after many conference resolutions and mission reports nothing concrete seems to have been achieved.

A fresh start on African thinking is called for which will provide an opportunity to look at how to manage the process of designing National Information Policies (NIP). One must look for alternatives to the present approaches which will put in place relevant policies with an impact on the development of a vibrant information and informatics sector.

A review of past experiences

A review of the literature on formulating national information policies carried out by us (Mchombu & Miti 1992) in Eastern and Southern Africa reveals a number of interesting elements, in terms of objectives, methodological approaches/process management, and outcomes. (Kontviloff 1990, Mascarenhas 1989, Lundu 1988, Huttemann 1987, Wesley-Tanaskovic 1985)

In analysing the experiences of the various countries in information policy formulation, we found a number of common perceptions by the information professionals, namely:

1) That the information sector receives inadequate resources from government.

2) That if a policy is put in place this would enable the sector to win additional government resources and recognition from the both government and the general public.

3) A common element in all the literature appears to be the call for a national organ to strengthen regulatory policies, for coordination, networking, standardisation, legal deposit, and define the responsibilities [territoriality] of existing information institutions. Such an organ, it is hoped, will help in the formulation of a national information policy and to secure adequate resources from government as soon as a policy was in place.

There has been almost a mystical belief that with an information policy in place all or most of the ills afflicting information services will disappear.

There has been a fairly uniform approach to the formulation of national information policies in Eastern and Southern Africa. This has involved first a workshop whereby the major stakeholders [National/ Public and University librarians, National archivists, and the major Documentation Centres] tabled their papers, describing the problems they face and made suggestions for a national information policy. Such discussions usually culminated in the formation of a National Information Coordinating Council charged with the responsibility of producing a policy draft and preparing plans for implementation. A major characteristic of the workshop and drafting process was that it was more of a bargaining session among the major stake holders with each of them safeguarding its territory jealously. Financial implications were generally ignored, or treated as an overhead to be absorbed by participating organisations. In general, the tendency was to maintain the status quo rather than usher in radical change.

Given the above situation, the only major achievement of these efforts has been to create and sustain awareness among information professionals that a National Information Policy is a required input in solving the problems facing the information sector in the respective countries. However, there was no consensus on how this could be achieved.

A number of obstacles have hampered the progress towards creating a national information policy.

First is the narrow definition of information that has excluded prominent players in the information sector such as extension services, the mass media, statistical information services, and computer bureaus etc. Information was restrictively defined to mean what is handled by libraries, archives and documentation centres.

Secondly the concentration on the distribution and coordination of that distribution rather than the production of relevant

information products. The African predicament is strictly the lack of the right and relevant information when and where it is needed. The process should therefore have concentrated on the production oriented policies rather than the consumption/distributive policies. In general there was a high level of preference for intellectual dependency, rather than charting a path towards national self-reliance in the local production of information products.

Thirdly, the ignoring of the government's stake in the information provision in Africa which has led to the restriction of information provision in the continent eg. secrecy of government documents, and governments control of the mass media to control what can be published,
censorship, the rural-urban divide in information services, the public right of access to government information, harassment of writers, consumer information services etc. One can understand the tendency to avoid these issues in order not to get into trouble form Africa's sensitive political forces, however, it does not however obscure the fact that important areas for information policy consideration are usually neglected. These issues have to be addressed before a meaningful policy can be worked out.

Fourthly, the assumption that no previous policies on information existed. There are already a set of policies on information that deal with information (whether they are good or bad is besides the point). The formulation of a national information policy has to start with the analysis and evaluation of the existing policies. After such an exercise it would have been apparent that what is needed is not a single information policy but a series of policies. It would have also been apparent that there is a necessary link between the information policies or policy with other national policies for education, industrialization and commerce, science and technology etc.

Our review of experiences on National Information Policy formulation in Eastern & Southern Africa indicates that the policy designing process has been uniform in all the countries, irrespective of any differences in political systems, and the main outcomes have been predictably identical (ie. formation of National Information Coordinating Council). Except in one situation, (Uganda) most of these information coordinating committees have not lived up to expectations and have tended to gradually fade away.

It is not surprising that the attempt at formulating national information policies have not succeeded. To succeed it is important that there is a re-definition of information to include diverse information sources, other than print-based information services e.g. extension services, the mass media, statistical information, computer data processing etc. and bring into the process participants in these sectors.

The production component of the information policy outputs is

incorporated into the process. This would involve the inclusion of publishers, booksellers, researchers and other producers/suppliers of information products in the process.

The contentious issues are tackled and included in the policy discussions; eg. censorship, harassment of writers, the neglect of the rural population, the right of the public to access government information.

A thorough analysis and evaluation of existing policies is undertaken, in order to evaluate their impact, and identify weaknesses and gaps in existing policies. This may also include abandoning the concept of a single national information policy in favour of several policies covering the different information activities/sectors. Such evaluation should be objective evaluation, rather than a subjective exercise performed by the heads of the information units, which ends up being descriptive, defensive and lacking in depth.

A way forward?

Rectifying the information policy making process in Africa by carrying out the remedial actions identified above would probably strengthen the policy making process. But would this constitute fresh thinking? We doubt it. To usher in new thinking, Africa's information professionals need , firstly to ask themselves a number of basic questions: The first and main one being: If National Information Policy is the answer, what is the question? What are they trying to achieve and why? What is the problem they are trying to solve? What are the strengths, weaknesses and threats to the three most active groups - Librarians, Archivists, and Documentalists? Given the assessment of their capabilities how best can they go about pursuing the goals they wish to achieve? Who else has similar interests/objectives?

We do not have answers to all these questions, partly because different African countries will come up with different answers. However, we shall make a number of observations which are related to the questions.

The drive to establish a National Information Policy in Africa is commendable, but it does not reflect the reality of the information situation in most of Africa. The fact is, the issue is not whether African countries should have a national information policy which in most cases they already do, but what kind of policies and programmes can stimulate the information sector to play a significant role in the national development process.

The need for an information policy is still a private concern for the information professionals. In our analysis of the experiences of countries in Eastern and Southern Africa one notable similarity among the different countries was the lack of a clear strategy on

how to achieve desired objectives. This poor strategization was obvious, for example, in the failure to realise that while political information is of interest to public policy makers, scientific and technical information is not. In general, in Africa there is little widespread public interest for reading (except for exams), the public is unaware of the computer/microcomputers as a vital tool in information handling, and the problems facing publishers of books and journals are not a public concern. Add to this a high level of information illiteracy in societies which have not yet become information driven societies and you will see why information matters in general are still out of the agenda of public policy makers in Africa. The challenge is therefore how to make information a social and public concern that deserves a place on the political agenda.

In the present set up, Librarians/Archivists and Documentalists are perceived by the public as neither strong nor important and often irrelevant. Two tactical moves seem to be called for to tackle this perceived 'weakness'. First is the formation of alliances with other like-minded groups eg. Statisticians, Journalists, Educationists, Researchers, Data processing and Computer Managers etc. Some initial awareness/sensitization to the need for an information policy for the respective sectors may be necessary before some of these groups are taken on board as full participants and equal members. This can be accomplished through joint seminars, discussions and some personal selling by the initiating group of information workers.

Another type of alliances is with user communities, e.g. those in Science and Technology, Industry and Commerce, Research, Education/Adult Education and of course Economic Development Planning, Agriculture etc. Most African countries, already have policies for the above sectors but often their information component is very weak, or has been neglected altogether. Detailed studies of these sectors, and how an information dimension could enhance performance would seem to promise some success, especially if presented to the right person at the right time. The belief we hold is that Africa should strive for sectoral information policies rather than a single monolithic information policy, which would be too unwieldily and complex to formulate and implement.

Another valuable tactical move would be to use the media whenever public decisions are made without using adequate information pointing to the need to use such information. To point out through the media whenever there is a public concern or debate on policy issues the need to apply adequate data and information to reach high quality decisions. There is also need to identify and use sympathetic politicians and senior civil servants to consistently point out where necessary information could be had. While this might sound far fetched, it is likely to have an effect on the image people have on librarians and other information workers and their role in society.

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WORKSHOP THEME (IF APPLICABLE):

COORDINATING DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION: the experience of Morocco.

THE DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SECTOR: its nature and particularities

Lekbir Battiwa

National Documentation Centre, Ministry of Planning, Rabat, Morocco

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COORDINATING DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION: the experience of Morocco.

THE DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SECTOR: its nature and particularities

Lekbir Battiwa

National Documentation Centre, Ministry of Planning, Rabat, Morocco

First of all, the overall consideration of the field of documentation and information leads us to emphasise those particular aspects which are specific to information, in a world in which its provision constitutes a strategic advantage for all economic and social development.

In this connection, the following aspects may be especially noted:

– Information is inherently interdisciplinary in nature. It lies at the heart of all branches of knowledge; it is possible, for instance, to speak of economic information, legal information, scientific information, and so on;

– The area of documentation and information is closely linked to technological innovations. The interaction of new information technology is making this area more complex and challenging;

– Both the need and the demand for information are constantly becoming more diversified;

– This area is coming to be more and more influenced by marketing techniques, by methods of systems analysis, by other commercial conditions.

If this is the case even in the industrialised countries, what is the situation of this sector in developing countries, particularly in Africa?

THE CURRENT STATE OF DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: the case of Africa

The current state of documentation and information in Africa is dependent on a certain number of factors, in particular:

– The lack of the necessary infrastructures, especially for processing, storing and distributing information;

– The almost total absence of means for communicating this information makes this task still more difficult;

– The lack of qualified personnel;

– Insufficient financial resources;

– The lack of consistent and adeqate national policies for the overall coordination of this sector.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS:

Given this state of affairs it is essential to consider certain proposals:

– Every African country should ensure that it has the appropriate infrastructures, particularly in the areas of processing, storing and distributing information;

– Given the lack of qualified staff, who are much in demand in African states, it would seem that the consolidation of training provision, both in terms of quality and quantity, should be one of the main priorities. It is true that in the absence of sufficient, qualified human resources, no information and documentation system can successfully achieve its goals;

As far as financial resources are concerned, it is essential for the development of the information sector that funding should be set aside to enable organisations and institutions to set up and run documentation units and to invest in information in general.

– Given the interdisciplinary nature of this field, as mentioned above, it is essential to set in place a well-coordinated and pro-active policy for the documentation sector which will both inform, orientate and restructure the existing documentation units and create new ones. This would make it possible to cover every African country with a practical and rational distribution network well suited to the needs of each state or region, as well as at the international level.

– This policy concerns all the individual sectors and all those involved in the domain of information and documentation.

– The difficult task of ensuring that this policy is put into practice could only be undertaken by a national agency which has a suitable structure and organisation, can exercise the necessary authority and call on adequate resources.

TOWARDS A PAN-AFRICAN POLICY FOR COORDINATION ..

As far as Africa is concerned, a certain number of observations and suggestions can be made:

– To proceed towards an interconnected network linking the different centres, organisations and systems of information situated in the different regions would constitute, in our view, a welcome further stage, given that new information technologies are available at low cost both in respect both of information storage and data exchange.

In this regard, the use of compact discs (CD/ROM) represents a widespread and easily provided practice: it cannot but be beneficial.

– The role of the private sector in the process of economic and social development is unquestionable. It follows from this that the private sector should be involved in any national information policy and that programmes should be developed which are specifically aimed at such involvement – particularly in the areas of training, consultation and the creation of data bases and data banks.

The fact that each member country has its own organisation and its own methods of information and documentation means that it is essential to fully implement the regionalisation policy and so to further the projects for coordination established between different countries, insofar as their situation and real requirements in this area may be similar or complementary.

This policy of regionalisation must take into account conditions as they exist in each region. In North Africa, for example, the use of Arabic is, in our opinion, a vital factor which can help to bring about closer relations between the countries of the region. It can therefore help to promote and reinforce coordination projects.

Thus, a first step will be to draw up a typology of the various areas involved in this cooperation and coordination. An obvious second stage would be to proceed to a choice of mechanisms for this cooperation. These must be simple, suitable and efficient, if all the partners are to be able to benefit from them.

All this must be completed by evaluation at regular intervals.

COORDINATING THE DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SECTOR: the Moroccan experience

The National Documentation Centre is aware of the importance of information as a means of, and a factor in development, and has, since it was first created, worked to set up a national information and

documentation network, connected to most of the major databases and data banks which are available at the inter-national, regional and global levels.

In order to be able to respond to the demands created by developments in Morocco over the last decade, as well as fulfilling the needs of the national network, the role of the NDC has grown so that, while continuing to collect, process and distribute information on the sciences, technology, economics and social sciences, it has become the true coordinator of the whole of the documentation and information sector in Morocco.

Thus, as was mentioned above, the NDC is making great efforts towards the creation, support and development of the national information and documentation network.

This policy can be best seen in action through the following:

– The application and updating of texts setting out guidelines and specifications for this sector;

– Taking part in the planning of the sector through its leadership of the documentation subcommission of the 'national commission for statistics, documentation, computing, engineering and new technologies'.

To accomplish these ends the NDC organises planning meetings and carries out the necessary studies;

– professional training: in order to supply the country's demand for information specialists, estimated at 1500 qualified personnel in 1972, the NDC set up a higher education institute in 1974, the School for Information Sciences (École des Sciences de l'Information), in order to provide training at two levels:

– a preliminary four-year course leading to a qualification as an information scientist.
– a more advanced two year course for specialised information scientists.

– the development of standards and working methods which are compatible with those already existing at the international and regional levels;

– carrying out studies and surveys within the documentation sector;

– as far as continuing education is concerned, the NDC organises courses for professionals who are already working in the field to allow them to improve their expertise and to keep up with current developments. A training group was set up for this purpose in 1989.

– a specialised consultancy service, particularly in the areas of the creation and use of documents and the development of data banks and data bases etc.;

– negotiating agreements and contracts with organisations or institutions who wish to link up with data bases at home and abroad.

– the creation of shared data bases and data banks, whether interdisciplinary or in specialised areas.

– the introduction of new information technology;

– the organisation of conferences and presentations in areas closely connected to the development of the sector and the realisation of its full potential;

– the organisation of seminars on marketing information with the aim of increasing user awareness, optimising resources and making information systems financially viable;

– the publication of a newsletter aimed at communicating information relevant to the sector and creating closer ties between its various parts.

THE NATIONAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE: future perspectives

Since 1980, following the massive expansion of the sector on a regional level, regional documentation and information services have been set up as part of the NDC within the Ministry of Planning's Delegations in the seven economic regions of Morocco.

These services carry out similar work to that of the NDC, especially as regards collection, processing, research, training, consultation, coordination etc. but at the regional level.

Alongside this decentralisation, the NDC has devoted considerable energy to ensuring that units take full responsibility for the areas which they are supposed to be in charge of.

On this point, it is interesting to note that the areas of banking and agriculture were the first to take this on.

In this way, within the next few years, the domain of documentation and information will be completely organised in networks according to specialised fields.

Faced with this state of affairs, the NDC will have to:

– strengthen its policy of coordinating the different components of the national information and documentation network;

– function as a central service, since it will centralise the data bases and banks used by all sectors and supply the necessary information to users. This will entail the rationalisation of the use of resources and the best possible use of the budget;

– develop a national policy on information and documentation;

– it will also take on new responsibilities, particularly in the areas of planning, following through and evaluating the various projects involving documentation in Morocco. It will therefore be necessary for it to change its administrative status.

We hope that this brief paper has shed some light on the means of promoting the documentation and information sector at the level of the African continent.

As we have pointed out, this sector involves high costs and complex new 'information technology'; this all makes cooperation between African countries even more vital. Any exchange of experience and skill is source of enrichment and development.

in conclusion I would like to emphasise that the National Documentation Centre will spare no effort, either on the national or the international level, to support any project, whether in Africa or anywhere else in the world, which aims towards the strengthening and the consolidation of the documentation and information sector in Africa.

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The Role of University Libraries in Establishing National Policies for Library and Information Services

by

Abdus Sattar Chaudhry,
Library Affairs, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran 31261, Saudi Arabia

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The Role of University Libraries in Establishing National Policies for Library and Information Services

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ABSTRACT

Policy documents of Saudi Arabia and Malaysia have been reviewed to examine provisions for library and information services and the role of university libraries in formulating and implementing national policies. In Saudi Arabia, scattered legislative provisions need to be integrated into a unified policy and the involvement of university libraries needs to be institutionalized for effective development of an information infrastructure. The Malaysian experience of establishing an integrated national policy by involving professionals from universities and other important sectors and implementing information programs through the National Library has been very successful in developing an appropriate system. This approach may provide a model for other developing countries for an appropriate policy framework and development of services for effective utilization of national information resources.

The Role of University Libraries in Establishing National Policies for Library and Information Services

by

Abdus Sattar Chaudhry

INTRODUCTION

A national information policy is expected to provide a framework for a planned and better coordinated development of an infrastructure that will ensure effective exploitation of information resources in a country. Menou identifies four major components of a national information policy consisting of: an image of the desired state of affairs, as a goal or set of goals; specific means by which the realization of the goal is to be brought about; the assignment of responsibilities; a set of guidelines regulating the implementation of the means.(1) Considering its crucial role, efforts have been made on various platforms to encourage the formulation of a national policy which will provide the often missing legislative framework and will guide further development of information activities.

Unesco has done considerable work on producing guidelines for formulation of national information policies. Member states were called upon for effective planning of information systems through the 1974 UNISIST program.(2) The 1978 Unesco guidelines provide a broader approach for a national policy formulation.(3) Its 1985 Guidelines propose a five-part approach to the formulation of a national

information policy.(4) These Guidelines have been criticized for lack of focus on the relationship between policies and systems, lack of proper guidance on crucial aspects of policy formulation and failure to provide a clear scope of information. Oli Mohammad, after a detailed review of these guidelines comments that coverage of information in an all encompassing manner makes the policy making process unwieldly.(5) He suggests that it may be more practical, at least at the initial stages, to limit the scope of an information policy to cover information resources falling directly within the functions of libraries, documentation, and information centers.

Erik Baark suggests that the formulation of a national information policy should be seen in a wider context than that of merely creating an inventory of information organizations, manpower, technologies, etc. His review of Indian and Chinese information policy indicates that institutions, manpower, and technologies do not arise in a vacuum but enter into a very strong relationship within their socio-cultural and economic contexts and become influenced by contextual characteristics and constraints.(6) Therefore, a much broader analysis of the framework within which information services operates is necessary.

John Gray discusses in detail the problems of formulating national policies in countries at different levels of social and economic development. A summary of special factors to be kept in view in the implementation of

such policies has also been provided in his latest book.(7)

Montviloff strongly feels that the key players in the process of policy formulation should be well drilled as their membership in committees, their terms of reference, and potential role of the organizations these members represent all have impact on the policy itself.(8) Menou very rightly considers the policy a dynamic process in which action is far more significant than theoretical constructs or make-up. Therefore, role of the parties to be involved in the process of the formulation of a policy document and the administrative set-up for its possible implementation are very crucial in exploiting the ways and means of putting policies into practice.(9)

Generally, national libraries are assigned the responsibility of formulating and implementing policies for library and information services. Appropriate policy formulation and its effective implementation, however, require the participation of all those organizations responsible for development of library and information services in different constituencies, e.g., public libraries, university libraries and scientific and technological information systems.

University libraries seem to have a greater potential to play an effective role in the formulation and implementation of national policies for the effectiveness of library and information services. Their role is becoming more crucial with the realization that contributions of different

components will be more helpful in the overall effectiveness of information services. Such an approach is expected to allow effective participation and better exploitation of the best available resources of a nation rather than adoption of pre-determined policy guidelines through a singular focal point.

This paper reviews the policy provisions for library and information services in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. These countries were selected keeping in view two considerations: acquaintance of the author with the library systems of these countries and representation of various levels of socio-economic development. Available policy documents were reviewed with a view of determining the adequacy of their provisions. Minutes of meetings of councils of university librarians were reviewed to examine the extent of involvement of university libraries in the process of the establishment of national policies and planning of library and information services. Suggestions to improve the policy provisions and to make the role of university libraries more effective have been made.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia

Development efforts in Saudi Arabia have been guided by a series of five-year plans. Beginning in 1970, five development plans have been issued by the Ministry of Planning. Education was one of the priority areas in all the

plans. There are seven universities with full-fledged libraries in the country. The university libraries are the most developed institutions of information. Many of these have already introduced computerized systems and have a great potential of making significant contribution towards improvement of access to information resources. The university libraries are headed by deans of library affairs. A council of Deans of Library Affairs has been set-up as a forum to discuss issues related to university libraries in the Kingdom. Four of the universities also offer library science programs at undergraduate and graduate levels.

There are 45 public libraries in different parts of the country administered by the Ministry of Education. A special department of libraries has been created to supervise library affairs. The Cultural Policy of the Kingdom provides for adequate support for public libraries. However, the library development policy has been criticized for lack of coordination and cooperation.(10) A newly developed library in Riyadh, the King Fahd National Library, has been authorized to function as a full-fledged national library through Royal Decree No.9 dated 13-5-1410(H). Recently, legal deposit authority was entrusted to the National Library through Royal Decree No.26 dated 7-9-1412(H).

The Directorate of Information systems and Technical Services of the Saudi Arabian National Center for Science and Technology (SANCST), established in 1977 and later renamed as King Adbulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), has

been playing a significant role in the planning and development of scientific and technical information services in the Kingdom. It was instrumental in establishing national bibliographic databases and an academic and research computer network called Gulfnet. This network is also being used for interlibrary loan services in the country.

No integrated national information policy has so far been developed. However, government pronouncements for establishing and supporting universities, KACST, the National Library, and other information institutions have served in various documents as policy guidelines.

Malaysia

Malaysia has launched six development plans since its independence in the mid fifties. The government has placed much emphasis on the education sector. There are seven universities with comprehensive library facilities. University libraries are headed by chief librarians. A Conference of Chief Librarians and the Director General of the National Library, called PURPUNE, has been set up to provide professional input on library related issues. A library association, Persatuan Perpustakaan Malaysia (PPM), has also been active in providing input to planning of libraries in the country. The library and information science school at the "Institute MARA Teknologi" (ITM) has been offering undergraduate and post-graduate diploma courses

in librarianship since 1970. Recently a masters program in library and information science has been introduced at the International Islamic University.

The National Library Act was promulgated in 1972 while the Preservation of Books Act had been in effect since 1966 and the Deposit of Library Materials Act was passed in 1986. Public library services are provided by state library corporations enacted through legislation in many of the states.

Efforts have been made for effective coordination of library services in the country. The National Library has been vested with a leadership and coordinating role in the establishment of the Malaysian National Information System (MANIS). A national bibliographic network, called MALMARC, and an inter-library loan system one also in place. A National Policy for Library and Information services was approved by the Government in 1989.

POLICY PROVISIONS

The following documents were reviewed to examine the policy provisions related to library and information services:

Saudi Arabia

1. First (1970-75); Second (1975-80); Third (1980-85); Fourth (1985-90); and Fifth (1990-95) Development Plans.

2. Royal Decree No.M/9 dated 13-5-1410(H) for King Fahd National Library; Royal Decree No.M/26 dated 7-9-1412(H) for Legal Deposit System; and Royal Decree No.M/60 dated 18-9-1397(H) for the establishment of Saudi Arabian National Center for Science and Technology (SANCST).
3. Development Plan for a National Information system for Science and Technology for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1978.
4. Cultural Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Malaysia

1. First (1965-70); Second (1970-75); Third (1975-80); Fourth (1980-85); Fifth (1985-90); and Sixth (1990-95) Development Plans.
2. National Library Act 1972.
3. Deposit of Library Materials Act 1986.
4. Development Scheme for Malaysian National Information System.
5. National Policy for Library and Information Services

Review of the above-mentioned documents indicated that provisions in the first, second, third and fourth development plans in Saudi Arabia remained limited to operational level and a conservative commitment of financial resources. It was only in the Fifth development plan that provision was made for a policy framework needed for overall development of library and information services. The Fifth Development Plan

(1990-95) has provided for the establishment of a National Committee for Libraries and Information Services. High priority objectives have been perceived for this committee in recommending responsibility for planning, coordination, follow-up and supervision and implementation of a plan for both existing and proposed libraries.

The Development Plan for a National Information System for Science and Technology made provisions for SANCST (now called KACST) giving it a unique responsibility for a mandate for the development of a national scientific and technological information system. Subsequent provisions in the SANCST's bylaws encouraged it to facilitate development of cooperative activities among the major libraries and information centers. As a result, KACST was able to make significant contributions through the establishment of national bibliographic databases, a computer-to-computer network (Gulfnet), and sponsorship of various programs to facilitate an interlibrary loan system.

The Cultural Policy of the Kingdom made an assuring pronouncement with regard to the development of public libraries by making the Ministry of Education responsible for the supervision of public libraries. The Ministry has created a special department under its own control to supervise library affairs. This department provides financial support to improve existing libraries and establish new libraries. However, the policy does not provide proper guidelines for effective planning and coordination of library

services in the country. Proper policy framework and legislative support for effective library and information services has been missing.

Lately there have been some encouraging developments which seem to provide a legislative framework at the national level paving the way for adequate policy formulation. The 1988 Royal Decree assigned the responsibility of providing leadership for the implementation of country-wide plans to the newly developed King Fahd National Library in Riyadh. The Royal Decree on Legal Deposit System also has adequate provision to enable the National Library to receive and conserve all types of publications. With its leverage of being a direct subordinate body of the Council of Ministers and the country-wide Board of Trustees, the National library is also expected to provide the missing links for effective infrastructure of library and information services in the Kingdom. But it all depends on how soon and how efficiently the National Library provides a mechanism to institutionalize the support for formulating and implementing an integrated national policy involving all major information institutions.

Malaysia is among the few fortunate countries where an integrated national policy for library and information services has been formulated. The national policy, approved by the Government in 1989, sets out broad guidelines for the systematic and planned development of library and information services in major sectors of the country. The policy adequately takes into consideration the present

infrastructure as well as the legislation enacted for the establishment of the National Library of Malaysia, the State Public Libraries and for the legal deposit of library materials.

The National Policy for Library and Information Services aims at the provision and progressive improvement of library facilities and services in order to contribute effectively to national development. It provides for a strategy for providing appropriate library and information services to serve Parliament, government departments, research institutes, universities, colleges and schools, and the public at large in a manner that those desirous of using such facilities will have convenient access to them.

The Malaysian National Policy of Library and Information Services places emphasis on the sharing of resources in order to maximize benefits from the investment of public funds. It also provides that all library materials produced within the country shall be deposited and conserved in accordance with the legislative provisions. Provisions have also been made for adequate support for the development of national databases and for the establishment of specialized information centers.

The National Library Act of 1972 provides appropriate authority and support to the National Library for an effective mechanism to initiate, coordinate and monitor the implementation of policy. In collaboration with the Malaysian Library Association (PPM), the Council of Chief

Librarians (PURPUN), the Library Schools, and the National Library had shown considerable progress in facilitating the development of a cooperative system for interlibrary loan and the exchange of bibliographic data.

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

In addition to informal discussions with university librarians, the following records were reviewed to examine the involvement of university libraries in the process of formulation and implementation of national policies for libraries and information services in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

1. Minutes of meetings and other related papers of the Council of Deans of Library Affairs in Saudi Arabia and PURPUN, the Council of Chief Librarians and Director General of the National Library of Malaysia.
2. Working papers of the Special Purpose Committee of the Ministry of Planning of Saudi Arabia.
3. Proposals regarding Malaysian National Information System.
4. Proceedings of the Seminar on Formulation of a National Information Policy for Malaysia.

As indicated by the deliberations of the Council of Deans of Library Affairs, University Libraries were not found actively involved in the process of national policy

formulation for library and information services in Saudi Arabia. No substantial discussion was found recorded on national policy issues in the papers reviewed. Even discussions on issues where policy framework is crucial, e.g., interlibrary loan, compatibility of classification and cataloging tools, cooperative acquisition, continuing education and the like lacked national policy perspectives. There is also no indication of either the Council forming any special committees or working groups on national policy formulation nor of its members being invited by national organizations to give input on a national policy for library and information services.

However, the working papers of the Special Committee of the Ministry of Planning indicate the involvement of university libraries in the planning process for the Fifth Five-year Development Plan. The Deans of Library Affairs of King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals and King Saud University were members of a working group. They gave appropriate suggestions related to policy framework, some of which were eventually included in the plan.

In case of Malaysia, the university libraries have been quite actively involved in the formulation of national policy for library and information services for the country. A review of PURPUN papers indicated considerable discussion on policy issues in its deliberations and substantial input by university libraries through membership in the Preparatory Committee for the Planning of the Malaysian National

Information System and its sub-commttees and working groups.

The records of the seminar held on National Information Policy in 1984 also confirm the active involvement of university libraries in the process of the formulation of the Malaysian national information policy. The Seminar was organized by the Chief Librarian of "Universiti Utare Malayia" and papers were also contributed by the Deputy Chief Librarian of "Universiti of Malaya" and the Chief Librarian of "Universiti Pertanian Malaysia". Among the 120 participants of the seminar, many were from university libraries. The Task Force on National Policy Formulation, set-up as a result of the seminar, also included members from university libraries. The Task Force completed the final draft of the National Policy in 1987, which was finally approved by the Government of Malaysia in 1989. A close working relationship between the National and the university libraries resulted in proper formulation and effective implementation of an integrated national policy. Consequently, all these collaborative efforts made the development of an extremely successful resource-sharing system possible. And, an effective infrastructure of library and information services in Malaysia also encouraged, through their efforts, a model which can be followed by other developing countries.

CONCLUSION

Adequate legislative provisions and an appropriate

policy framework are crucial for the effective development of an information infrastructure in a country. Such provisions need to be integrated into a comprehensive national policy to provide a mechanism of coordination and cooperation among various sectors for better utilization of national information resources. This can be achieved through proper formulation and implementation of a national policy involving all major types of libraries and information centers. Being most developed, the university libraries seem to have a greater potential for significant contribution in this process.

Review of major policy documents indicated that while some recent developments, e.g., Fifth Five-year Development Plan, Royal Decrees of King Fahd National Library and Legal Deposit System have given due consideration to policy provisions, legislative provisions and appropriate policy framework have been missing in Saudi Arabia for a long time. There is still a need to develop an integrated national policy for library and information services so as to be able to exploit effectively the recent legislative provisions.

Malaysia has been fortunate in having adequate and timely legislative provisions and a proper policy framework for the development of library and information services in the country. The availability of an integrated national policy for library and information services seems to be a valid indicator of a mature level of cooperation between the professionals and the leadership of the National Library and

other professional organizations such as the library Association of Malaysia and the Council of Chief Librarians.

Input of university libraries in the formulation and implementation of national information policy, despite its great potential, has not been found at an encouraging level in Saudi Arabia. This might be linked with a lower number of professional librarians in the Council of Deans of Library Affairs, and low frequency of meetings of the Council, but the major factor in this situation is the absence of a mechanism for coordination among various sectors in the field of library and information services. This has also been pointed out in earlier studies. For example, a study of interlibrary loan in the Gulf region in 1989 revealed that despite a desperate need for resource sharing and the availability of an excellent technological base the performance of interlibrary transactions in the Kingdom was found unsatisfactory.(11) Availability of a coordinating system and frequent exchange of information among professionals was recommended to remedy this situation. This was also confirmed by another paper on of the feasibility of establishing a bibliographic network in the Gulf region. The discussion on the potential of and the prospects for a bibliographic network concluded that lack of a coordination mechanism was a stumbling block in the development of a much-needed bibliographic network.(12) Consequently, facilities made available through developments of telecommunication and automated library systems could not be exploited for

effective utilization of information resources in the Gulf Region.

It seems imperative that King Fahd National Library take steps to initiate the formulation of an integrated policy for library and information services in Saudi Arabia. Following the Malaysian model professional input from librarians and information specialists should also be sought through professional meetings, seminars, working groups, and special-purpose committees. Since the National Library has now received the mandate of initiating appropriate steps for the development of library services in the Kingdom, it seems to be a high time to finalize the long overdue plan for establishing a professional society or library association for better exchange of information. The Malaysian model also encourages the institutionalization of involvement of university libraries in the process of policy formulation and implementation.

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THE ROLE OF THE USP LIBRARY IN MEETING THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGION

Ann Rizio and Jayshree Mamtora

The University of the South Pacific

Suva, Fiji.

For internal use only:

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Ann Rizio and Jayshree Mamtora

Introduction

The University of the South Pacific (USP) was established in 1968 as a regional University to meet the needs of eleven Pacific Island nations. These are the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. A twelfth member country, Marshall Islands, has recently joined. In the vast South Pacific Commission area the University is a major resource base, both in terms of personnel and facilities. The University's main library based in Suva, Fiji, is one of the largest in the region so far as collection and staff are concerned. In view of this, and the small sizes of the few National and other libraries in the South Pacific, the USP Library attempts not only to meet the needs of its geographically scattered patrons, but also to respond to the information needs of the South Pacific Commission region generally. In addition to its more traditional roles, it has therefore assumed roles, and undertaken activities, normally associated with a National Library and/or a special library.

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Regional background

The South Pacific Commission region covers 29 million square kilometres of ocean - an area comparable to almost nine times the land area of India, or the combined land area of India, the United States, Canada and Australia. The land area of the twenty-two island states and territories of this region occupies, less than 2% (553,293 square kilometres) of the ocean area. (See map, Appendix I). To put this into perspective, this total land area is a little smaller than the land area of France or less than twice the size of Italy.

The twenty-two countries in the region have varying racial compositions, cultural backgrounds, political systems, administrative methods and hundreds of different languages and dialects are spoken. (Flores, 1977).

The primary language of communication throughout the region is English, however French is dominant in the French territories of New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis & Futuna whilst Fiji has three major languages - English, Fijian and Hindi.

The economies of the island states are based on agriculture and fisheries and some countries have growing manufacturing and tourism industries. However for many countries the subsistence economy persists. (Williams, 1991).

The University of the South Pacific is a regional University established in 1968 to serve the needs of eleven of the twenty-two island nations of the South Pacific Commission area. These include, in descending order of number of students, Fiji, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Western Samoa, Nauru, Tuvalu, Niue, Tokelau. Marshall Islands has recently joined as the twelfth member. (See Table 1, Appendix II). The governments of the University member countries contribute to its funding on the basis of number of students from each country.

The main campus of the University is based at Laucala Bay in Suva, Fiji. It comprises three schools - Humanities, Pure and Applied Science, Social and Economic Development - plus the University Extension Unit, the Media Unit, the Computer Centre, four consulting Institutes and the Library. Other schools and units have also been established in the other member countries. A School of Agriculture has been established at Alafua in Western Samoa; a Pacific Law and a Pacific Languages Unit in Vanuatu, an Atoll Research Unit in Kiribati; an Institute of Rural Development at Tonga and plans are under way to establish a Marine Studies unit in the Solomon Islands.

The University is a major resource base in the region in terms of academics, professionals, library collections and specialized services such as Computer Centre and Media Unit. It has a total staff of 666 of whom 619 are based at the main campus in Fiji. Of the total staff, 325 are academics and professionals and 341 are intermediate and junior staff. (See Table 2, Appendix II).

It has a total student population of almost 10,000 - seventy per cent of whom undertake their studies as extension/distance education students scattered throughout the twelve member nations. In both categories the major proportion of students comes from Fiji: they account for 58% of the off-campus and 76% of the on-site students. The smallest proportion .35% come from Tokelau. (See Table 1, Appendix II).

Apart from Tokelau, there is a University Centre in each of the member countries. Each Centre has two-four full-time staff and at least a small library collection. Some of these libraries are unmanned except for clerical staff from the Centre Office who open the library when a user needs it. Others are manned part-time, usually by a para-professional; and three libraries have professional librarians some of whom are on short-term aid projects.

The collections in most of the national, public and special libraries in the South Pacific Commission region, are relatively small and professional staff are few.

Main USP Library in Suva, Fiji

By comparison, the main USP Library in Fiji has a staff of seventy, of whom fifteen are professional librarians and seventeen are para-professionals.

The library consists of a three-storey building with a seating capacity of 600 and houses the largest library collection in the USP region and one of the largest collections in the wider South Pacific Commission region. It has a stock of 332,875 volumes, 876 subscription titles and approximately 12,000 periodical titles received by exchange or gift. It acts as a depository for the United Nations and its agencies, the World Bank and for EEC documents. It has a recurrent budget of F$340,000 excluding aid donations from various sources. (USP Library annual report, 1991).

In 1988 it began implementation of an automated integrated library system, URICA, and at the date of writing it has installed the Cataloguing, Acquisitions Control and Circulation modules. Two-thirds of the monograph collection has been retrospectively converted and work is continuing on the remaining titles and the serials holdings. It has ten CD-ROM titles including ERIC, ASFA, POPLINE and BiblioFile.

Wider role of the USP Library

Whilst the USP Library provides the more familiar services usually undertaken by a University library, over the years it has attempted to respond to the information needs not only of its University community but of the wider South Pacific Commission region. In so doing, it has assumed extramural roles some of which are normally performed and/or associated with a National Library and others which fall more naturally into the services of a special library so that it finds itself in a triple role of academic/national-regional/special library.

These activities include identification and collection of regional publications; production of national/regional and special bibliographies; training of library personnel; acting as a depository; establishment and operation of an ISBN centre; and provision of regional information services.

Many of these extramural activities of the USP Library are undertaken via its Pacific Information Centre (PIC) and more recently its Pacific Islands Marine Resources Information System (PIMRIS).

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Pacific Information Centre (PIC)

The need to establish a bibliographic and information network linking libraries in the Pacific region had been recognized in the 1970s. After a number of regional meetings a regional bibliographic centre was established in 1979 within the USP Library. In 1982 it adopted the title of Pacific Information Centre (PIC) and funding for its operation was obtained from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canada. It is currently staffed by one Librarian and two Assistants.

PIC is primarily concerned with the collection, publication and dissemination of information on the South Pacific region.

PIC's collection and publication roles

PIC's main objective is to identify, collect and record published and unpublished materials originating in the South Pacific region, or about the region to ensure a complete collection of the region's publishing output. It maintains a centralized bibliographic record of the output and enables retrieval of specialist information from these records as required. This information also provides the data base for PIC's major publications such as the South Pacific Bibliography and other regional or subject publications.

The role of the PIC network focal points scattered throughout the region is to assist with the collection of material originating in the region by either sending a copy of the items to PIC or sending copies of the catalogue records for materials acquired by them.

Publications about the Pacific are added to the USP Library's Pacific Collection and records are entered into the USP Library's database Pasifika. Particular emphasis is given to literature that is significant to the region's economic and social development. Information about these collected items is then disseminated widely throughout the region and further afield via PIC's publications. (See Appendix III for list of PIC publications).

PIC has created databases for each of its publications. These can be searched and select lists printed out. It is envisaged that these databases will be incorporated into the USP Library's main database.

PIC network

PIC's network is not restricted to the twelve USP member countries but extends to all twenty-two countries in the wider region. It works closely with the libraries of regional organizations such as The South Pacific Commission, The South Pacific Forum Secretariat, The Forum Fisheries Agency, The South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and national PIC focal points established in other libraries of island countries. (See Diagram, Appendix IV).

PIC attempts to maintain regular contact with the region's library and information personnel. Apart from written communications which include its quarterly newsletter which is distributed widely to 417 addresses, PIC holds satellite meetings each month to discuss details of the Centre's activities and exchange ideas. Furthermore, once a year, members of PIC meet as the PIC Advisory Committee and review the past year, discuss problems and propose future projects.

Training needs

Apart from its primary role of collection and publication of Pacific material, PIC has also helped pave the way for library training in the South Pacific. From the beginning it was envisaged that PIC would assist in contributing to the wider region, a nucleus of trained documentalists and information personnel so that there would be the required skills and means for the region to participate in regional and international co-operative information systems in various mission-oriented subjects, such as POPIN on population. (Mamtora, 1991).

PIC focal points in the region had for some time expressed the need for formal training in library and information studies. USP Library, through PIC, responded to this need with both formal and non-formal training programmes.

Since 1981 USP Library has organized, written, administered and taught library and information studies via two formal programmes - the Certificate in Librarianship and the Diploma in Library and Information Studies. Both programmes are taught through distance education using satellite communications for tutorials for students not located near Suva.

PIC has also organized workshops both at the USP Library and at other regional centres. These include a Training of Trainers workshop for librarians in the region, and others on Disaster Preparedness; Integrating Library and Informational Skills into the School Curriculum; and Basic Library Skills.

Apart from formal training and workshops PIC arranges attachments for library personnel to spend two-six weeks learning various skills at USP Library as required by library staff in the region.

Pacific Islands Marine Resources Information System (PIMRIS)

As stated earlier, the South Pacific region is dominated by its marine environment. Marine resources are crucial to its island economies. Marine-related activities are important and information about these activities is also vital. (Creech, McDowell, 1991).

The need for a regional marine information service was conceptualized and expressed by both librarians and fisheries officers in the mid-1980s. (Flores, 1983)

Responding to this regional information need, the PIMRIS Co-Ordinating Unit was established at the USP Library in 1989 under the umbrella of PIC. The primary mandate of PIMRIS was to develop a regional information service for fisheries and marine resources. This would entail the organized collection, bibliographic recording and dissemination of information about marine resources in the region; the production of a series of publications including specialized bibliographies and a quarterly newsletter; provision of professional advice and training in the establishment and organization of departmental libraries. (Simmons, 1990).

PIMRIS operates as a co-operative regional network. The Co-Ordinating Unit based at USP Library is staffed by a Co-ordinator, an Outreach Information Officer and an Assistant. The Co-Ordinating Unit links with the libraries of regional organizations active in marine resources such as The Forum Fisheries Agency, The South Pacific Commission and The South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission.

Just as PIC's attempts to meet regional information needs are not restricted to USP member countries or the USP communities, PIMRIS also responds to requests for information or assistance from any fisheries and geology personnel of the twenty-two countries of the South Pacific Commission region.

Database and Current Awareness Service

PIMRIS has made considerable progress towards achieving its objectives.

It has created the Moana database which contains records of Pacific marine resource materials from the libraries in the region. PIMRIS staff actively collect both material to add to the Pacific Collection and/or records of relevant material to add to the Moana database. The PIMRIS co-operative has produced information packages on, for example, Ciguaterra; Tourism and the impact on the environment; Driftnet fishing; Climate change and sea-level rise. It has also produced specialized bibliographies as requested and continues to mail a quarterly newsletter to 342 addresses.

The Co-Ordinating Unit at USP Library provides a Current Awareness Service based on marine-related journals acquired at USP Library (currently numbering 108). Between January and December 1991 information requests made to PIMRIS increased by 308% - an indication of the increased awareness of PIMRIS by users and the value placed on marine information by both government and non-government organizations. (USP Library Annual Report, 1991). A recent statistical survey indicates that the largest percentage of PIMRIS users during 1991 were fisheries officers (37%) followed by USP students (20%). (PIMIS Co-Ordinating Unit, 1992). (See Appendix V).

Training

The Outreach Information Officer has made many consultative visits to national focal points in fisheries departments in the region where the PIMRIS database structure on CDS-ISIS has been installed on PCs. The small library collections in the departments have been organized and attempts have been made to train available personnel in both entering and retrieval of records as well basic library collection management.

PIMRIS has also arranged attachments of regional staff to USP Library for information management training. It is hoped that with training and experience these national units will be able to become full co-operating partners by contributing records and materials to the information network.

Pacific POPIN centre

This is one of the USP Library/PIC's newest undertakings, again responding to the information needs of a wide region and linking libraries in the area.

In 1990 after approaches from the Asia Pacific Population Information Network (POPIN), a Pacific POPIN centre was established within PIC. It is still in its developmental stage and it is envisaged that its main activities will include the collection of regional Population publications and the production of three directories on Population Research, Population Experts and Population Institutions in the region.

All of these activities undertaken by USP Library have provided a focus and direction for library and information work in the region.

Conclusion

The establishment of PIC, PIMRIS and Pacific POPIN at USP Library attempted to fill gaps that existed in library co-operation and information needs of the region. In the face of the scarcity of trained staff in the region, and the USP Library's relatively large pool of professionals, it has undertaken work not usually associated with an academic library.

However, the work has not been without its problems. Difficulties were experienced in dealing with untrained personnel, poor communications, small national and departmental collections; libraries with low or no financial backing; and were compounded by a community not aware of the significance of information to planning and development. Outside funding for PIC recently ceased and its running costs have been absorbed by the USP Library.

However, despite these difficulties USP Library through its Pacific Information Centre has managed to respond and meet many of the information needs of the widely scattered countries of the South Pacific Commission region. The information networks have strengthened from year to year including the establishment of the other specialized networks in marine resources and population information.

PIC's work has led to an increased commitment amongst regional librarians to share their resources (both publications and qualified staff); increased exchange of information; improved awareness of the development of librarianship in the countries of the region.

Though the future of both PIC and PIMRIS has its concerns, it is clear that, as one of the largest resource bases in the region, the USP Library will continue to play a vital role in meeting the information needs not only of its member communities but for all the twenty-two countries of the South Pacific Commission region.

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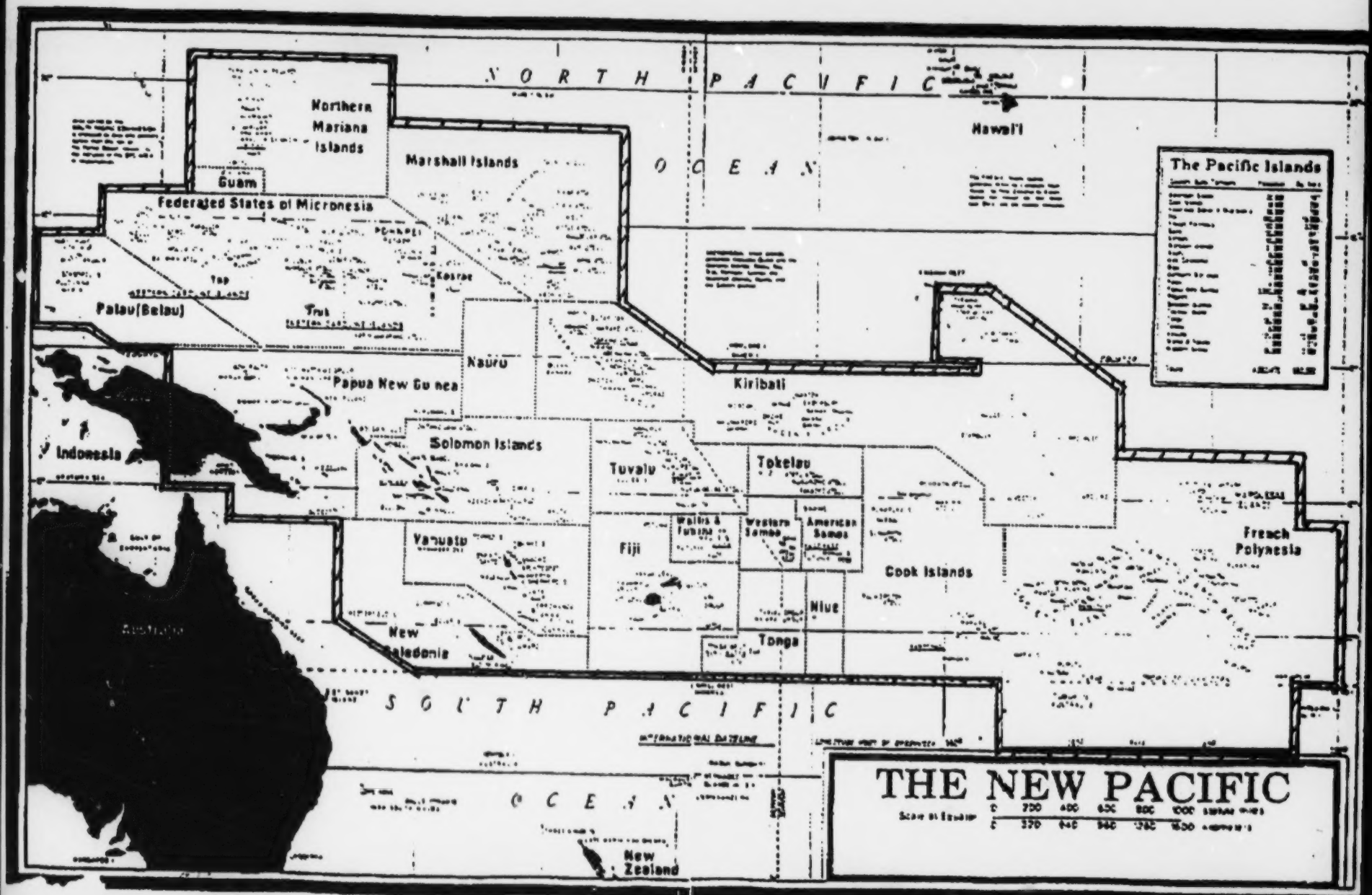

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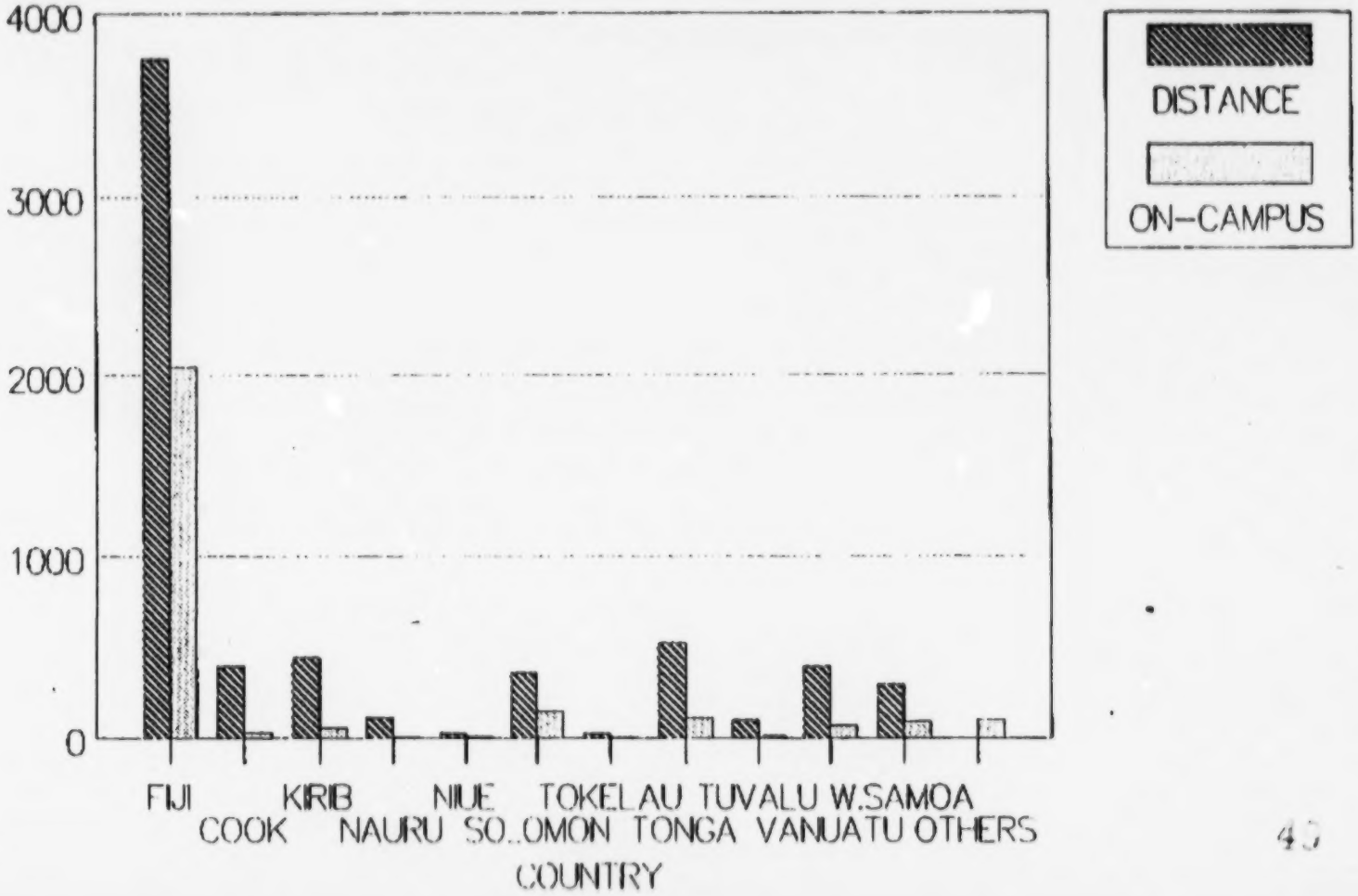
STUDENT ENROLMENTS

DISTANCE AND ON-CAMPUS BY COUNTRY, 1990



APPENDIX II

Table 2

STAFF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

IN FIJI	619
IN OTHER USP COUNTRIES	47
TOTAL	666

ACADEMIC	325
JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE	341
TOTAL	666

APPENDIX III

PIC publications

The South Pacific Bibliography is an annually produced listing of Pacific materials added to the USP Library collection in that year.

Also from the Pasifika database can be produced/"peeled off" smaller bibliographies as requested, either country or subject specific. PIC has already produced South Pacific bibliographies on Teaching English as a Second Language; Plant Protection; Soils Information; Population Education; Environmental issues; Kava; Pacific writers; Nuclear issues; Women.

Other regular publications of the PIC include the South Pacific Periodicals Index which indexes articles on the South Pacific
identified from a core list of USP Library's periodicals.

The South Pacific Research Register is produced biennially and lists researchers working on subjects relating to the South Pacific.

PIC's other titles include Recent Additions : Pacific and General which lists monographs newly acquired by the USP Library each month; the University of the South Pacific : publications an annual listing of works written or published by USP and its staff and students; and the PIC newsletter a quarterly publication containing news pertaining to PIC and its focal points.

APPENDIX IV

PIC NETWORK

USP MEMBER COUNTRIES

SOLOMON IS

KIRIBATI

TOKELAU

FIJI

TONGA

COOKS

TUVALU

NAURU

WESTERN SAMOA

VANUATU

MARSHALL

NIUE

PIC at USP LIBRARY

- Bibliographic Work
- Information Services
- Training
- Technical Services

SPC

SOPAC

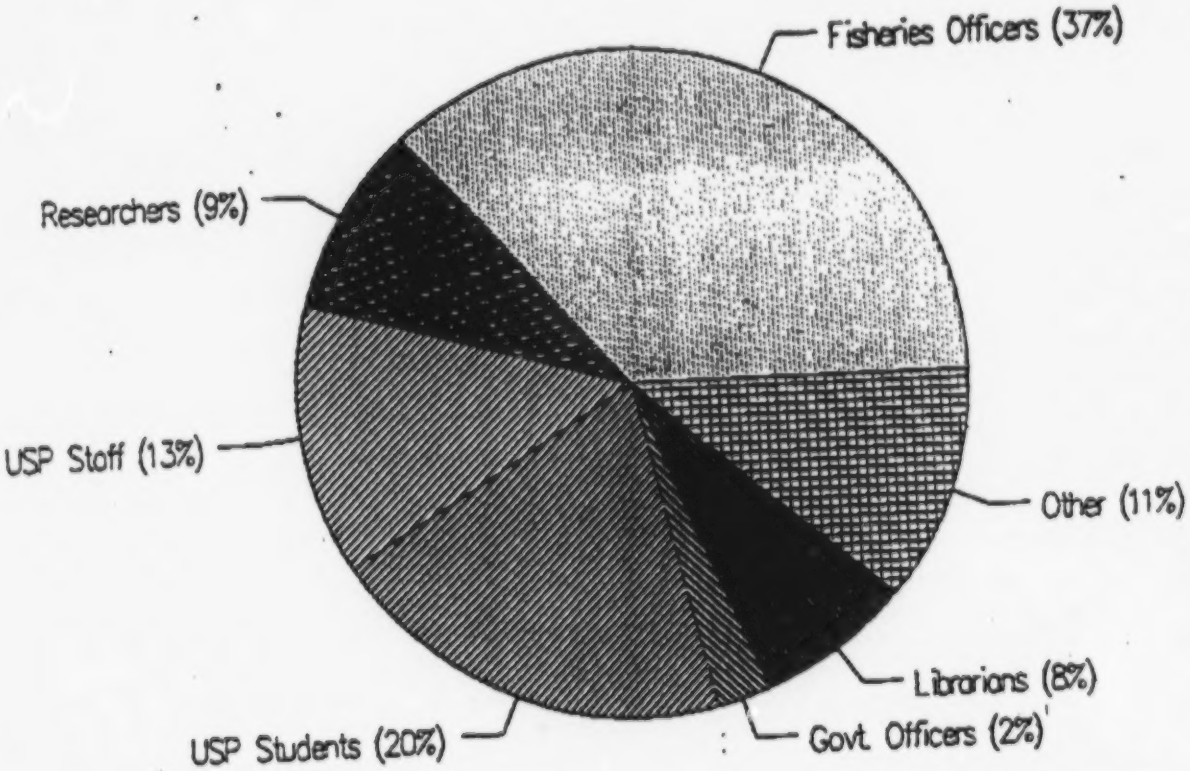
FORUM SECRETARIAT

FFA

SPC REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

PIMRIS STATISTICS 1991

SUMMARY BY USER TYPE



IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE NEW DELHI 1992

Division: REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

74-ASIA-3-1

Section/RT: ASIA/OCEANIA

Joint Meeting with:

WORKSHOP THEME (IF APPLICABLE):

THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE LIBRARIANS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND THE PALISADES THEY ENCOUNTER IN OBTAINING THESE INFORMATION

Written by

Pradeepa Perera

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For internal use only:

Meeting No: 115

SI: yes/no

Estimated number of participants in the meeting:

THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE LIBRARIANS OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND THE PALISADES THEY ENCOUNTER IN OBTAINING THESE INFORMATION.

The profession of librarianship is traditionally defined as an integrated system of three interrelated parts bound by an administrative authority. The three parts can be stated as acquisition, organization and services.

However, it is evident that this traditional three part role played by the librarian is not sufficient at all for the modern library, because the libraries and their role in the society are changing rapidly. The first and foremost factor which causes this change is the development of computers and related technology.

As a consequence, present day librarian has to step into a multifaceted role which embraces traditional as well as non-traditional aspects of librarianship. The multifaceted role can be viewed as having four major facets namely, the management facet, social facet, technical facet and professional facet. In the endeavour of achieving the near ideal position, the librarian is faced with the need for obtaining information relevant to these different facets.

However, the librarians in developing countries are not in a position to exploit the full benefit of the information available in the developed countries due to several reasons. Poor economic conditions, language barrier and the distance between the generators of information and users can be listed as the major such palisades. Until the national policies of the relevant countries are established to overcome these shortcomings, the lack of information for the career development of the librarian is going to affect the development process of the countries.

THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE LIBRARIANS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND THE PALISADES THEY ENCOUNTER IN OBTAINING THESE INFORMATION.

We have been providing information for others since the origin of our profession. and those who obtain information from us have been changing the society utilizing that information. How would this change affect us, can we face the change without redefining our profession, can we survive with the amount of professional information available for us at the moment, should we devote more time to develop an information system for ourselves. My paper is an attempt to answer some of these issues.

Emergence of librarianship as a recognized profession is a fairly modern development. In the later part of the 19th century, with the growth of the complexity of their functions libraries found it necessary to develop new technical skills in classifying and organizing the large volume of information available. Librarian's main role during this period was to select, acquire and organize the material be they books, journals or non-book material and to make them available for those come in search of information.

However, it becomes evident that this traditional role played by the librarian is not sufficient at all for the modern library, because the libraries and their role in the society are changing rapidly. And two factors are contributing to this change more than anything else.

The first and foremost can be said to be the developments of information technology. Later part of the 20th century is experiencing a brisk advancement of technology which has been

felt by the librarians as well as the library users. With the developments of micro computers most of the libraries have become ardent users of them. Computer technology goes further to link individual computers into Local Area and Wide Area Networks by which communication between distant libraries is made possible. In addition Laser technology is revolutionizing the information storage and retrieval aspect by means of CD ROMs. Librarians of developing countries cannot circumvent the influences of these technological products. Library users become aware of these modern technologies when they interact with the libraries of developing countries which satisfy their information needs in a more sophisticated manner, and as a result of this awareness they pressurize the local librarians for a more upto date and quality service than merely presenting them with books and periodicals on neat rows of shelves. In order to face this changing environment with forcefulness, we must be cognizant of these modern inventions.

Secondly the unstable economic conditions of the developing countries is making a colossal impact on the role of the library in a larger scale. Library services are badly affected when it comes to cost reductions since very often they are chosen as the first items to be curtailed. The librarian in this instance has to keep on struggling to satisfy the ever increasing user demands with an ever decreasing or stagnant budget.

Hence the present day librarian is confronted with the task of fulfilling two inversely proportional objectives - namely to provide a better and modern library facilities to users and to

keep house with a limited budget without letting the quality drop at the same time. The modern librarians of developing countries have to step into a multifaceted role which embraces traditional as well as non-traditional areas of librarianship, to deal with these two contradictory objectives.

This multifaceted role can be viewed as having three major facets in addition to the professional facet - namely the management facet, social facet, and the technological facet. To play this new role successfully the librarian needs information. What sort of information is that?

Information needs of management facet of the librarian

Management is concerned with accomplishing certain defined activities and it is people who accomplish the work. The balancing of activities and people become the task of the manager. Yet, the successful manager does not act purely on his intuition but on a theoretical knowledge of decision making, planning and marketing concepts. The librarian can be described as a manager without doubt, since he or she is concerned with accomplishing certain activities, and balancing these activities and people who accomplish the work. Accordingly the librarian can benefit by applying the theoretical management concepts to attain his goals.

Modern day librarian obviously has to make crucial decisions on library procedures, and necessarily should employ long and short term planning. These two concepts become specially important when

attempting to achieve the expected standards with ever decreasing resources. On the other hand the librarian requires to advertise his products in order to survive. Products of information technology like CD ROMs and commercial online databases, detracts the user away from the library by providing them with the facility of obtaining information, avoiding the library. Even if this situation is not yet visible in developing countries we may anticipate it with our rapidly developing commercial sector. It becomes the duty of the librarian to safeguard the position of the library.

To meet these challenges, present day librarian in the developing countries needs a wealth of information relevant to the management concepts which can be employed in the library management.

Information needs of the social facet of the librarian

Modern libraries can be described as open systems- which interact in a large scale with external organizations like professional bodies, book publishers, manufacturers and various other groups, in contrast to the traditional libraries which existed in isolation as closed systems- with less interactions with the external organizations. In the era of modern technology, while we appreciate and encourage the technological developments to be adopted in the libraries, we should at the same time appreciate the human behaviour. No technology can perform its function independent of human beings. If this fact is not taken into consideration, human beings who will be affected by these

technological innovations will always show a kind of hostility towards them and will consequently develop defence mechanisms like absenteeism, slow work rate, postponement of duties, avoidance and even resignation at the end.

As a repercussion of pressing economic problems and changing work environments, staff depression might increase while motivation decreases. The librarian will have to play the role of a psychologists or a psychoanalyst in overcoming these problems. To tackle this kind of human centered problems the social facet in his role will be beneficial immensely.

With the introduction of new technological products,the role which librarian has to play as an educator is intensified. It is not underestimated here the role of traditional librarian played as an educator but the modern librarian who introduces products of information technology especially the computers in their libraries will have to go to the user groups in a more personalised or individualistic manner.

In the effort of developing this social facet of our profession we need information related to human behaviour, psychology, psychoanalysis, methods of education and many other fields of social science.

Information needs of the technical facet of the librarian

As I mentioned earlier the change in the society is caused mainly by the information technology. Librarians are compelled to use products of IT, especially computers. In order to achieve the

full benefits of the technology, he must then possess a technological knowledge. yet this is not to say that the librarian should be an expert in the field, but at least a basic knowledge in Electronic Data Processing will become useful.

The problem solving methodology used in computer technology consists of four stages namely the analysis of the problem (systems analysis), design of a solution (systems design), implementation of the system and review. These stages are commonly known as the system life cycle because this process works in a cyclical manner. Once a solution is implemented it will run smoothly for some time and will lead to quandaries again.

Introduction of modern information technology into our libraries can be contemplated in the light of the systems life cycle. Lets consider the purchase of a computer to the library as an example. We may believe that the computer will solve our problem if we procure one, but at this stage we have to consider whether our problem can really be solved by using a computer or at the first instance whether we actually have a problem at all. The first stage of the system life cycle- the systems analysis stage can be employed in the endeavour of answering this question. Secondly if it is established that a computer can solve our problem we have to make decisions on the suitable hardware, software, and personnel. This is the stage of systems design. Thirdly the selected system have to implemented. For this, things like electricity, air conditioning, installation of machines, user training and various other site preparation work has to be

dealt with. Finally when the system is activated, we have to evaluate it against our expected standards.

In performing all these functions it is not denied that the librarian has to seek assistance of a multiplicity of professionals other than library staff. Especially computer personnel. To obtain a maximum service from these personnel, the librarian must be able to express his needs and requirements in a way in which the professionals understand and also the librarian must not let them confuse him by using their glossy trade vocabulary.

To acquire this kind of technological knowledge the librarians must have access to information, related to all stages of systems life cycle.

Information needs of the professional facet of the librarian

With the impact of modern technology the volume of information generated is increasing rapidly. The annual output of information is so large, we begin to wonder as users of information whether we are losing control. On the other hand this wealth of information generated with the aid of technology has not been utilized in its maximum capacity.

Librarian as the professional has an important role to play in this environment of information explosion. He should be acting as the agent of information transfer between the producer and the client.

In this process we have to expand the horizons of our traditional

professional duties - the selection, acquisition, organization and the dissemination of information. To perform these functions efficiently we need current and advanced information relevant to the traditional role of the librarianship.

Palisades we encounter in obtaining information.

The aforementioned discourse revealed the number of fields in which we librarians need information for the advancement of our career. Yet there is a question we can pose. Are we capable of fulfilling this information needs within our countries. It is obvious that this is not viable. It is a sad fact that sometimes we come across information relevant to our neighbouring countries or even to our own countries in foreign libraries, mainly in developed countries. These information is not available for us. What are the palisades that prevent us from receiving the information which is essential for our professional survival.

The main palisade can be said to be the distance between the information generators and its potential users in developing countries. As a result of this far too great distance, we are not aware of the existing information. The application of theories of other disciplines in librarianship cannot be assumed unless we are made aware of their relevance.

Once we realize the importance of such other disciplines, then we face the selection of suitable literature. The concept of information explosion is predominantly existing in the developed countries. Vast amount of literature is published on each specific subject. We are not in a position to obtain all those

information or even to know their existence. It is true that we receive publishers catalogues for books and non-book material, but the extensive amount of information published in journals is lost for us. One can argue that we can subscribe to reference tools like indices and abstracts which cover most of the published information. Yet obtaining hard copies which contain the actual information is not an easy task.

We have to go through abstracts and keywords to select what we require and then request the hard copies from the available sources. Because of the distance between the information and the potential user a considerable period of time is lapsed before receiving the hard copies. By that time we may no longer need that information. Sometimes the abstracts and keywords may mislead us by giving the wrong iinterpretation and the final product may not be what we expected.

Employing the new technological developments, information can be produced in a multiplicity of media, in addition to the printed form ie. magnetic form, micro form, audio visual form or electronic form. But in most of the developing countries the technology still available in our libraries is only the Gutenberg technology. Hence, however important a piece of information may be, if it is not produced in a format which we can make use of, it bars us from using the information.

Even the printed information can be in a plethora of languages which we do not comprehend. This too can be one of our barriers to access information. For instance most interesting applications

of micro CDS/ISIS are published in Hungarian, Russian, Slovak and other non-English languages. But however much they are useful we cannot use them because of the language barrier. Even the vast amount published in english cannot be said to be useful since it is only a limited number of our colleagues are literate in English. Common language of communication is one of the reasons which brought us all here to this conference, but the information produced here in the major languages will not be fully available for those who know only the vernacular.

The core of all our palisades in obtaining information can be said to be the cost of information. The information generated in the west is highly priced and the problem is further aggravated by our increasing exchange rates. In obtaining information from the generator the high cost not only consist of the hard copy cost but the postage, reprographic charges, telecommunication charges if used are also included. If high cost reference tools like online searching or CD/ROMs are used their cost also will be added. It is obvious that the individual librarian cannot afford all these costs, not even the hard copy cost. And our employers are also not in a position of bearing them, on the other hand the employers do not realize that we librarians need that much of information to survive.

Last but not least, culture can also be a palisade for us in obtaining the information. A good example for this is my absence from the conference. Our cultural beliefs did not allow me to change my plans for tomorrow hence prevented me from attending the conference personally and I have been deprived of the

opportunity of listening to the valuable presentations made today and sharing information with the colleagues from most of our neighbouring countries.

How could we then rectify this problem. We have to find answers to our main problems. We must get closer to information or information must get closer to us. Not only that, but the information should be in a medium and language suitable for us and at a convenient price. In this endeavour collective decisions of librarians becomes important since it is not much that they can do as isolated individuals.

What we have to do is to establish national and regional information systems for us, not for science & technology not for social sciences but purely for library & information science. The task of this information system must be collecting, organizing and dissemination information among the librarians at national and regional levels. During this process information should be translated into suitable media and languages enabling the librarians of the particular country and the region to utilize them. In order to reduce the costs, policies should be formulated in a way in which the high costs can be shared among the members.

In this endeavour too we will have to face the problem of financing such projects. We must convince the respective governments of the importance of our career development for the overall development of the society in order to obtain financial assistance from them. Foreign funding sources also could be approached in addition to the central governments.

15 copies

IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE NEW DELHI 1992

Division:

Section/RT: LATIN AMERICA -

Joint Meeting with: AND THE CARIBBEAN

118-LATAM-2-E

WORKSHOP THEME (IF APPLICABLE):

PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

MARIA ELENA ZAPATA Z
Director of Public Library Networks
National Library and Library Services Institute

Caracas, Venezuela

For internal use only:

Meeting No: 90

SI: yes/~~no~~

Estimated number of participants in the meeting:

Translation

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SUMMARY

The subject of Public Libraries in Latin America and the Caribbean is approached from a social perspective which links the services' traditional mission to a new perception of development in the region as it enters into the third millennium.

The Introduction refers to the World Declaration on Education for All, whose principles confirm the importance of involving public libraries in aggressive social policies for human resource development.

The first chapter makes a brief analysis of Latin America's particular and complex situation 500 years after its discovery.

The second chapter refers to the present situation of public libraires in Latin America. It begins with a historical overview and then mentions the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Public Libraires Association (ABIPALC) as an effort in regional cooperation and integration. The analysis of the present situation is based on information obtained at a Regional Meeting held in February 1992.

The third chapter analyses a new conception of development in the region, together with the new mission for Public Libraries which has been proposed by the Association. This mission, which has to do with capitalizing on human resources for development, also allows a visualization of the problem of generating and applying knowledge for problem-solving and for social improvement.

As a conclusion, three aspects of outside experiences that can be transferred and used in the region are explained. Then, the Public Libraries' democratic essence is analysed, whereby by providing knowledge and information for everyone, they compensate unequal opportunities in education and create conditions for social participation of the underpriviledged.

INTRODUCTION

When speaking of public libraries in Latin America, we must necessarily refer to the problem of education, that is, to the need to use education as a means of attaining development and a better quality of life.

In fact, this theme was the focal point of an unprecedented world-wide effort at the beginning of this decade . In March 1990, four agencies of the United Nations System: the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank convened a "World Conference on Education for All" in Thailand. More than 1500 participants, including education specialists, delegates from different countries, and representatives from 20 intergovernmental agencies and 150 non-governmental organizations attended the Conference.

The resulting " World Declaration on Education for All", approved by general consensus, offers a renewed vision of basic education which transcends school in its purpose to satisfy basic learning needs for all. It is a question of creating the proper conditions so that children, youths and adults can acquire knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes that will help them solve their problems, obtain the goods and services they require for a better quality of life, and contribute to the development of their communities and nations.

In this context, public libraries are called to play a vital role through their involvement in aggressive social policies oriented to human resource development, and by acting as clearing houses for specific demands for information and knowledge. Public libraries must support education, especially for the underprivileged, by offering information which will give the common citizen the knowledge required for problem-solving in his particular social environment, and for democratic participation.

Five hundred years after the first encounter between the European and American cultures, , and only eight before the third millennium, public libraries in Latin America face the challenge of clearly defining their mission in a Region of immense

potentiality, but where the knowledge needed to improve the quality of life has not yet been generated or applied.

1. LATIN AMERICA TODAY

A DIFFERENT REALITY

Today, five hundred years after the so-called Discovery of America by Europe, Latin America's socioeconomic situation is plagued with contrasts which make it very different from North America.

Perhaps one of the most peculiar situations is that in Latin America, unlike more advanced and less favored countries, we can find both a great number of individuals with university education and large masses of underpriviledged individuals who are excluded from the educational process and who rarely go beyond the first three years of school.

Illiteracy rates in the Region average 14%; in some countries like Bolivia and Brazil, they exceed 18%. Despite government efforts, an ever-growing number of children do not have access to school, dropout rates are high, and adult illiteracy rates continue to be high as well.

At the same time, in most countries, enrollment rates have doubled and even tripled during the last twenty years, producing an accelerated growth even in rural areas. University enrollment has also undergone an impressive increase: in 1960, only 1.6 % of the population aged 20-24 attended university; twenty years later, the proportion is 1 out of every 6 (16.7%)

This phenomenon seems to be linked to the economic growth experienced during this period. However, in spite of the fact that the regional GNP [1] practically doubled during this time span, poverty was not eliminated: in 1960 around 50% of the population lived in poverty; in 1980, the proportion was 35%.

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[1] Gross National Product

In the last 30 years, Latin America has drastically changed from a rural to an urban society. At present, the majority of the population lives in cities of more than 20.000 inhabitants, yet, poverty and inequality persist.

According to Pedro Vuscovic (Martner et al, 1987), "by 1970, it was estimated that 54 million people (18% of the total population) lived in extreme poverty and another 113 million (40%) were poor. Most probably, this picture has not changed from a qualitative point of view. ..." Income distribution is extremely unequal . The same author reports that the poorest 20% of the population receives only between 2 and 4% of the total income, while the upper 10% of the population receives between 35 and 50% of the total income.

The dark side of Latin America's current scenario is also determined by changes in world economy (which began in the eighties), the fall in oil prices, which caused a crisis in some of the countries, the foreign debt pressure, which is common to most of the countries, and neoliberal policies which are marking new directions for world economy, and a new type of relationship between developed countries and the so-called Third World.

THE BRIGHT SIDE

Now let us consider Latin America's many strong points and opportunities.

As a whole, our Region has attained medium income and productivity levels which place it in an intermediate position between the less developed and the more advanced regions of the world.

It has a large contingent of experienced and relatively well-qualified labor. In spite of high illiteracy rates, the population's average educational level has improved considerably. The strategic problem in this area is how to mobilize and optimize this potential.

Natural resources form part of our comparative advantages. We occupy more than 15% of the total world area, and possess 10.5% of all arable lands and 24.5% of the world forests. We are also privileged insofar as our water, energy and mineral reserves are concerned.

Capital assets such as roads, railways, power generation and irrigation works , buildings and media installations also represent an important base for economic development.

The creation and development of independent nations has allowed the region to accumulate important sociopolitical experiences in areas such as economic management, and in the design and implementation of development plans and programs adapted to our particular context.

In addition to institution-building within these nations, experiences in integration and in regional and sub-regional cooperation have opened new ways for including and representing Latin America in the international arena.

As Ottone points out (Martner et al, 1987), "... it is a complex and cluttered reality...We believe it is no chance that literature and art are foremost in their capacity to grasp reality and comprehend the depth of Latin America's historical process: wonderful and exaggerated happenings, the reasons for nonsense in a strange, mixed-blood story that springs original from the interweaving of two worlds and two different histories is better depicted in García Márquez and Carpentier than in any sociological analysis."

2. PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN LATIN AMERICA

A BIT OF HISTORY

1974 is a milestone in the history of library services in Latin America and the Caribbean. That year, a group of experts met in Paris under UNESCO sponsorship, and formulated the theoretical and operational basis for the development of National Information Systems (NATIS) in Third World countries.

Some of the countries in the Region, like Venezuela, began organizing their National Public Library Systems (NPLS) under NATIS guidelines that same year. To date, these National Systems have attained variable levels of development .

In 1982, common problems were analyzed during the Regional Meeting on Current Situation and Development Strategies for Public Libraries in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Caracas. Among the main difficulties pointed out by delegates from different countries were: politician's lack of interest in public libraries; lack of basic laws for developing library systems and services; exclusion from national development plans and programs; difficulties in obtaining funds for adequate collections and for hiring qualified personnel; insufficient training of all levels of library personnel and the tendency for public libraries to assume the role of school libraries. .

Undoubtedly, on of the most important achievements of this Meeting was the **Caracas Declaration**, prepared by experts from 30 countries and regional,national and international cooperation and technical assistance agencies operating in Latin America.

The Declaration follows ,the general principles of UNESCO's Manifesto on Public Libraries, but at the same time clearly defines "... the role of Public Libraries in Latin American and Caribbean countries, so that they can respond to the Region's historical process, its aspirations and integration efforts". It also states its support to the London Declaration "for a literate society" (CERLALC, 1982)

THE CREATION OF ABIPALC

During the 1982 Regional Meeting, a proposal was made to create the **Latin American and Caribbean Public Libraries Association**. The objectives of this Association would be to strengthen cooperation and the exchange of experiences and knowledge among countries, to promote the improvement and development of library services, to obtain more recognition and to contribute to the training and updating of the Region's professionals and technical personnel.

The proposed Association became a reality in 1989, when the Regional Center for the Promotion of Books in Latin American and Caribbean (CERLALC), with the National Library of Venezuela's collaboration, invited the countries in the Region to another meeting for the purpose of evaluating progress since 1982, analyzing alternatives for defining a regional model for a System and proposing joint actions.

Delegates from 16 countries who attended this "Seminar on Public Library Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean" held in Caracas, approved ABIPALC's Incorporation Agreement and bylaws and elected its Executive Board.

This effort in integration in the area of information and public libraries has its origins in Latin America's shared history and cultural traits, but at the same time it is an acknowledgement of our "vulnerability upon entering the international relations system as isolated units" (Martner et al, 1987).

Latin American countries have become aware of the importance of creating national and regional integration organs as a means of supporting joint efforts to improve life standards and of transferring information and knowledge produced or applied by other countries of the region, which are more easily applied than those from other parts of the world.

Two years after its creation, ABIPALC had 41 member from 12 different countries At the beginning of 1992, it obtained support from IFLA, UNESCO, OAS and the National Library of Venezuela to hold a Second Regional Meeting in Caracas.

Delegates from 18 countries attended this Meeting, which had the following objectives:

- To review the present situation of public libraries in the Region and analyze their real and potential participation in total literacy programs and in promoting reading; and

- To establish strategies for regional cooperation for programs and projects oriented to public libraries' participation in total literacy programs and in promoting reading.

During this Second Meeting, experiences related to the central theme were presented. The following aspects were treated: book production and children's literature; marketing for public library services as related to promoting reading ; plans and programs for promoting reading and writing in the classroom; extension activities; and two relevant educational experiences: Colombia's **Escuela Nueva** (New School) and Venezuela's **Plan Lector** (Reading Plan).

Working groups were organized for each sub-region (Central America, South America and Caribbean). After examining each country's situation, and identifying common problems, these groups reached a consensus that the main obstacle in attaining objectives is the **lack of sufficiently qualified personnel at technical and managerial level**. In a number of countries, as a result of this situation, there appears to be a shortage leaders to mobilize resources towards the sector and to establish and implement a clearly defined, innovative and convincing direction for public libraries.

In view of this, a regional pilot project was proposed through which technical personnel and professionals will be trained in organizational and technical methods for optimizing the public libraries' action in total literacy programs and in promoting reading.

UPDATE ON PUBLIC LIBRARIES

At present, many of the problems pointed out in the Regional Meeting ten years ago still persist. These are:

- Insufficient development of the national information sectors in most countries
- Nonrecognition of the importance of public library services, as evidenced by their exclusion from national development plans
- Severe funding problems for both systems and services

- Insufficient collections to respond to the growing demand of users, most of whom are students from all levels of the educational system . As a result of having to attend to the information needs of schoolchildren, public libraries have not been able to respond to the needs and interests of other groups of potential users.
- Insufficient editorial production in most countries, which in general, is not adjusted to the real needs of large sectors of the population This situation creates an excessive dependence on foreign editions, which are difficult to acquire because of the high costs of both publications and import duties.
- Lack of qualified personnel for developing public libraries that can meet the information and education needs of the population, both at operational and managerial levels
- Low salaries of technical and professional personnel as compared to other library and information services, and the inexistence of professional associations in many of the countries.

The greater or lesser development of the National Systems is directly related to the economic, political, social, ideological and institutional changes experienced by the different countries of the region. Thus, while some countries are just beginning to create their Systems, others like Mexico, Cuba, Colombia and Venezuela have been able to build National Systems which, in spite of their differences, bring us nearer to the possibility of defining a regional model.

The **Mexican** System is characterized by the creation of a strong library infrastructure, with more than 2.000 public libraries at national level. It is basically oriented to complement formal education at secondary level. At the same time, an important development of the national book industry has allowed a massive endowment of the services.

Cuba has achieved and interesting relationship between public libraries and economic production units, by installing services in factories, sugar mills and other production centers and by offering relevant information for this sector, as for

example, industry and commerce registries. They also have valuable experience in developing services for the blind, which exist in all provincial libraries.

In **Colombia**, government initiatives to develop a National System as well as Municipal and State Networks coexist with private efforts to create networks and services. This is the case of Banco de la Republica, which has its well-known Luis Angel Arango Public Library in Bogota and subsidiaries throughout the country; also, the so-called Cajas de Compensacion Familiar (Family Allowance Funds), created by associations of private companies, have established public libraries in several cities as a service for their employees and their families.

At the same time, a number of "people's libraries" with strong popular roots have been created by communities. Public libraries in Colombia are very involved in cultural activities, especially in recovering traditions and folk culture.

The National Public Library System in **Venezuela** was created under NATIS guidelines in 1974. Its rapid and continuous growth has been due to many factors: a favorable economic and political situation, the experience transferred by Banco del Libro[2], the permanence of its executive staff, an ever-growing demand for library services, and the technical and normative direction provided by the National Library and Library Services Institute, the government institution which heads and coordinates the national information sector.

This System is the result of negotiated agreements with national, regional and local governments, with the private sector and with community and non-governmental organizations. The 620 services which make up the system follow common policies, strategies and norms, but belong to 23 decentralized library networks (one for each State). This makes for a more efficient use of resources, and for plans of action based on local needs.

From the start, this System has placed special emphasis on promoting reading among children and youths, for both recreational and educational purposes. This

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2 Banco del Libro is a private, non-profit institution established in 1960

is why services for children and youths were created in almost 100% of the public libraries, which since 1991, also participate in the project "Plan Lector de Cajas Viajeras" (Reading Plan), coordinated by the National Commission on Reading.[3]

Another relevant aspect is the Program for library buildings which is provides guidelines and norms for the design and standardization of buildings, furniture and signs, and for the acquisition of technical equipment (audiovisual, photocopying machines, etc) at national level.

Other countries have also had important experiences in the creation or consolidation of their National Public Library Systems.

Brazil's federal organization has encouraged the development of Regional Networks and Systems of Public Libraries. Recently, the National Library began to work on establishing a National System and has expressed great interest in taking part in activities to promote reading, some of which already exist in that country.

During the last few years, countries like **Chile** and **Ecuador** have made successful efforts to consolidate their respective Systems. Other nations, like **Bolivia** and **Argentina** have not yet structured National Systems; nevertheless, they have developed interesting experiences in services. This is the case of the Centro Cultural Portales , in Bolivia, which has set up a local System of Public Libraries, very involved in rescuing local traditions and folk culture, and with considerable experience in total literacy and in promoting reading and writing.

Some of the war-torn Central American countries have made significant efforts to create favorable conditions for the information sector, even if they have not been able develop their public libraries adequately. In **Nicaragua**, for example, the

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3 The National commission on reading was created in 1989 and is made up of different public and private institutions related to education. It is responsible for executing the National Policy on Reading, approved by the Ministry of Education in 1989.

Asociación Nicaraguense de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil (Nicaraguan Association for Children and Young People's Literature) **(ANLIJ)** is carrying out a local editorial program, in a joint effort with foreign organizations and international cooperation agencies. Its publications are oriented to promoting reading among children and youths, and to revitalize traditional culture.

In spite of the obstacles which have limited the development of National Systems under a common model for the whole region, the cumulus of national experiences mentioned above, which are perfectly transferrable among the countries in the region, can be used to define a **new model for public libraries** which would be valid for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The above experiences underline the fact that, regardless of the amount and variety of resources available to them, public libraries make a great effort to in tune with the problems of their communities, thus abiding by the postulates of "Education for All" and by the principles of the Caracas Declaration.

SOME INFORMATION ON STATISTICS

A database on public libraries in the region was created by ABIPALC in 1991, based on the results of a 15-country survey.

One of the most important results of this regional survey was to verify how difficult it was in many countries to find an organization which could inform on the characteristics and conditions of public libraries, and provide general statistics on a local, regional and national level.

The results and scope of the survey were limited by this circumstance. The information obtained does not permit valid comparisons among countries. In some cases, the data refers to service units, and in others, local, regional and even national networks and systems.

At any rate, an important conclusion drawn by those of us who participated in this study is that we need to carry out thorough and systematic research on the libraries in the region, and then, **establish a reliable statistical information**

system to provide a real base for both research and regional and sub-regional cooperation activities.

3. LATIN AMERICA IN THE YEAR 2000

A DEFINITION OF DEVELOPMENT.

Given its complex and particular reality, Latin America must find its own definition of the concept of development . As Iraset Paez (1992) shrewdly pointed out at the recent Regional Meeting in Caracas, "... the concept today does not seen as concrete or stimulating, because among other things, the world village in which we live is not yet socially happy in any of its parts: those who have technology don't have magic realism; those who have magic realism don't have technology; and those who have magic realism and technology don't have any water".

Paez also associates the new concept of development to the notion of social intelligence, defined as a society's capacity to solve problems by producing and applying knowledge. This way, the value of information is measured in terms of development. It is no longer a question of importing information from more developed countries, but of applying information to produce the knowledge which will in turn solve the problems of development.

We can infer, then, that a poor community is one that cannot produce the goods and services it needs to create a satisfactory standard of living. Thus, poverty is directly related to the inability to acquire, process and apply information for problem-solving and for satisfying basic needs.

In contrast, a developed society is able to produce and apply information and knowledge to change its environment for its own benefit.

A NEW MISSION FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The new concept of development can be linked to new values underlying development strategies: **Solidarity**, meaning, negotiated agreements among different social sectors; **Efficiency** in managing institutions and in establishing an

effective partnership between the State and the citizens; **Participation**, by way of incorporating the underprivileged into the mainstream and of creating adequate institutional channels for citizens to exert pressure and express their demands; and **Creativity**, in producing and applying knowledge so as to replace costly foreign knowledge and technology needed to satisfy basic needs.

By valuing creativity, we recognize and value information and knowledge as a basis for self-managed development.

This recognition compels us to link the historical mission of public libraries in Latin America to socioeconomic development . The tenets of this mission are stated in the **Caracas Declaration on public libraries as a development factors and as instruments for social change in Latin America and the Caribbean.** According to this, **public libraries should**:

- Assure the population free access to information in all its formats . This information should be extensive, updated, and represent mankind's philosophy, ideas and his creative imagination, so that the individual and the community may understand their historical, socioeconomic, political, and cultural environment. .

- Stimulate the population's active and effective participation in their communities, thus enhancing the libraries' role as an instrument of social change and of democratic participation.

- Promote the rescue, understanding, dissemination and safeguarding of national, native and minority cultures as a contribution to the creation of a national identity, and as a way to foster knowledge and respect for other cultures.

- Promote the education of a critical, selective and creative reader by simultaneously developing his motivation to read and his ability to enjoy it, thus training each individual to play an active role in society.

- Support permanent education at all levels- both formal and non-formal- with emphasis on literacy programs and services for children, youths, new readers and readers with social and physical impairments.

- Serve as an information and communication center for the community.

- If necessary, start and develop national library services, especially in small countries.

- Support the development of an economically strong and culturally independent book industry at national and regional level.

Based on these principles and those of the **World Declaration on Education for all,** public libraries must redirect their actions to:

- Support cultural development projects committed to social change.

- Support formal and non-formal education, as a way of raising the educational level of the underprivileged

- Become centers for social organization, participation and mobilization by supporting the creation of small and cooperative industries; popular markets; support programs for women, native communities and ethnic minorities in general, programs for people with special needs; and others.

- Become clearing houses for distribution of information for specific demands, so as to foster the production and application of knowledge for problem-solving and for the development of communities and nations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The current crisis experienced by our region does not seem to be transitory.

Public libraries urgently need to improve their facilities, funding, human resources, leadership and management to be able to undertake new challenges and participate effectively in the production and distribution of knowledge and information needed for attaining social wealth, a better quality of life and education for all.

In Latin America, we have already advanced in this direction. To prove it, we have many positive experiences which can be optimized and used throughout the region. Among these, we would like to highlight:

- Positive results in associating public libraries with different social sectors, whether it be as independent services or in the form of Systems and Networks. These sectors include National, regional and local government organisms, private companies, non- governmental organizations, international development agencies and especially, organized citizen groups (community, cultural and youth groups, neighbor associations, etc.)

  These "alliances" have resulted in the recognition of the social function of public libraries and the obtainment of human, technical, and financial resources for better services and more effective social action.

- Active incorporation of public libraries in plans and campaigns for promoting reading and writing and total literacy, often in leadership roles.

  Here, public libraries carry out a basic action which complements the formal educational process and which contributes to create adequate conditions for the incorporation of large sectors of underprivileged people to the educational process. On the other hand, by learning to read and write, they have better access to the information and knowledge needed to train them for incorporation into the economic mainstream.

- Training of personnel to achieve: on the one hand, strong public libraries that can act as development factors and as instruments of social change in the region; and on the other, well-managed local and national systems able to respond to the circumstances and requirements of each country and more efficient and effective in their operation, development and use of resources.

The successful experiences of many countries can be transferred and optimized by including them in regional cooperation projects. The final results of any such project should be oriented to the production of training materials in all available formats (manuals, guides, diskettes, videos) which can easily transported, so that they can be used in all the countries.

Regional integration and cooperation, the exchange of experiences and joint action for training and improving the human resources needed to carry out the development of the information sector in the region can be important elements in helping public libraries fulfill their new mission.

As we face the third millennium, the great challenge for our region is to solve the problems at the base of the educational system and to attain education for all.

In confronting this challenge, public libraries are perhaps the most democratic institutions, not only because all social sectors have access to them, but also because they compensate the differences between the private and public sectors of the educational system. These sectors do not compete with each other as they serve two different groups with different purchasing powers.

To fulfill their function of compensating the unequal distribution of income, public libraries must allow the less privileged to have access to the information they need so that they can obtain quality education that will allow them to become full-fledged citizens of our countries.

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NETWORKS OF SPECIALIZED INFORMATION SERVICES IN LATIN AMERICA

BY

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Networks of Specialized Information Services in Latin America

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ABSTRACT

Because of advantages such as resource sharing, avoiding unnecessary duplications, granting access to information on a broad scale, in due time and at reduced costs, networking is being increasingly adopted in Latin America and in the Caribbean. The present study deals with the definition of networks and information systems, considers their advantages and presents models of configuration of such services.

This study details some operative information networks in several fields of knowledge in the above mentioned region. A list of addresses of the networks presented here has also been included.

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   ANNEX

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to socioeconomic problems in underdeveloped countries, we have to increasingly endeavour in order to integrate their cultural, scientific and technological potentialities so as to produce an *articulation* that may ensure a coherent and well balanced development of the Region.

Devices that can ensure a better awareness of these potentialities and types of information *exchange* should be set up so as to maximize the available resources and disseminate broadly this data, which should always reach the users in proper form and especially be available when decisions have to be made either by public or private organizations protecting the social, cultural and economic interests of our countries. We should make the best out the developments achieved in this field, rationalize the use of resources and cooperation and should introduce new information technologies in such a way that information may be taken as a *resource* and so that, in each country, it will be acknowledged both as regional offer and demand.

In Latin America and in the Caribbean, networking is incresingly expanding itself, because it

is through resource sharing that we may have access to the information we need, avoid unnecessary duplications and grant access to existing available information in the region, in due time and at reduced costs.

In this study, we first define networks and information systems, because these terms are often used interchangeably. We deal with the advantages of networking and its structure, leading to the description of networks found in Latin America and in the Caribbean. However, this study is neither exhaustive nor intends to be seen as pioneer, but may stimulate other studies to go perhaps deeper.

Since we are fully aware of the importance of knowing about, having access to and making use of the services and products of networks found in the Region, we are including an annex containing their addresses, so as to facilitate the indispensable approach for supplying the needed informational resources in Latin America and in the Caribbean.

2. INFORMATION NETWORKS OR INFORMATION SYSTEMS?

Relying on a revision of literature made by BALDUíNO and on studies of ARAÚJO and PAULA, we are led

to the conclusion that, usually, the terms "networking" and "system" are used interchangeably. The SLA Networking Committee defintes network as "a formal arrangement according to which several libraries and other organizations engage in a common standard for information exchange, materials and/or services, having as target a functional purpose."

GRAY of the British Library gives the following definition: "An information network is essentially a means of joining a large variety of users This definition departs from the idea that each source is based on certain resources and that these resources, even if possibly elaborated for a specific purpose, should be shared by all that can profit from them".

On the other hand, VON BERTALANFFY, in his *General Theory of Systems*, defines a system as a "complex of interacting elements".

According to PAULA, as a good example we can take the INIS - International System of Atomic Energy, which is called a *system*. Also the ISONET - the ISO network, which is called *net*. In both cases, however, the model of organization and performance is practically the same, as per example: decentralized information gathering, centralized processing and integration of this information, and decentralized use and distri-

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bution. This example shows well the use of both terms indicating the same meaning.

For better clarification, we reproduce here the chart "Basic differences between the concepts of 'network' and 'system'", taken from BALDUINO'S Master Dissertation:

NETWORKS	SYSTEMS
- Interconnected elements	- Integrated elements
- Common objectives	- Specific objectives (of the system)
- Autonomous components	- Interdependent components
- Individual characteristics	- Standardization
- Cooperation	- Intercomplementarity
- The lack of one component will not endanger the attainment of the network aims as a whole	- The lack of one component will endanger the attainment of the system aims as a whole

A full account of the application of these basic differences is specified in the above mentioned dissertation. Balduino arrives at the following conclusions regarding the definition of networks and

systems:

- The network is formed for the attainment of a common purpose when the components agree to comply with conventions, attributions, etc.;
- The system is conceived, philosophically, as a definition of attributions of each element of a set designed to attain a pre-determined objective;
- Whereas the network components interact and reach effective communication, producing mutual exchanges of influence and so configuring a kind of inter-dependence, the system consolidates and enlarges itself. Thus the network components may also become parts of a system;
- It is impossible for a network to exist completely deprived of a system, even if it is present only as a philosophical concept of the network as a whole; and
- The system, on the contrary, can exist independently from a network.

This verification allows us to conclude that the two realities under study - "network" and "system" - may cohexist in the same structure and the name chosen, be it network or system, may be used, as it almost always happens, for both aspects simultaneously.

As it could not have been otherwise, the same is applicable to Latin America and the Caribbean, where these terms are used interchangeably to designate programs of cooperation aiming at a common purpose.

Taking the above into consideration, we will use the term "network" in the present study.

3. INFORMATION NETWORKS

The ultimate objective of networking consists in offering wider and better services to the users, at reduced unit costs and in due time. It is as if isolated units would get ready to become integrated and share services and collections, forming a "common fund" to which any user may resort to.

Among the advantages of networking, we can emphasize some aspects such as: better utilization of information, allowing broader information sharing by an increasing number of users aware of their requirements. Also as an advantage, there is the non-duplication of services and products, which avoids costs with unnecessary duplication. Quickness in serving is another benefit of networking, since the alternatives in the search of information are broadened. Sharing the

development of common services and products involves economy of costs, which will result in benefits for the participants of the network.

3.1 Configuration of the Information Networks

Among several studies on the structure of information networks, we have singled out LINSTON and SHOENE's suggestion that the following factors deserve consideration: function, scope, large number of clients, organizational basis, availability of workmanship, degree of centralization of authority and production of imported tecnology as compared to domestic.

The same authors, while examining factors and conditions prevailing in Latin America, concluded that the model tending to centralization is the most adequate for the Region.

On the other hand, GROLIER considers that according to their territorial extension, networks comprise:

a - infranational level (local and regional)

b - national

c - supranational (regional and world-wide)

a - Infranational level: local and regional networks

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As an example, we can quote the networks of public, university and other libraries which, as a rule, are co-ordinated by a central library and constitute the most representative models of local networks

b - National level

It comprises national information systems or networks, planned and structures so as to meet the information requirements of a certain country. Being mostly in use in Latin America, these networks cover especially scientific and technological fields. A typical example of this kind of network is the Mexican Scientific and Technical Information System developed by the National Counsel for Sciences and Technology [Conselho Nacional de Ciencias y Tecnologia (CONACYT)].

c - Supranational level

It comprehends multinational firms and International or Regional Information Systems as well as International Networks sponsored by UNISIST (World System of Scientific Information).

Of this kind are the networks directed toward information requirements existing in Latin America and in the Caribbean.

4. OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION NETWORKS IN LATIN AMERICA AND IN THE CARIBBEAN

In underdeveloped countries, the concept of network, as we have already mentioned in the Introduction, is being well accepted, because it is with networking that the economically less favoured countries find a solution for the access to valuable information at acceptable and shared costs.

In the study "Latin American Information Networks" ["Las Redes Latinoamericanas de Información"] presented at the Taller-Seminar on the Experiences of the Regional Information Networks in Latin America, in Havana - Cuba, in 1988, observations on the development, handling and utilization of networks have been registered.

In a global overview, it shows that the first networks established in the Region were designed for data base in technological and scientific fields, such as agriculture (AGRINTER) and health (BIREME). Another example in the field of education is REDUC, which was created in order to facilitate communication among researchers of the field, forming a data base comprising information and resumés.

In the same study, it is said that the failure

of some networks is due to the fact that same could not rely on strong support of a regional orgnization and that of others results from the fact that their initial objectives have been superseded. The benefits of some networks have not been limited to the participating information units. Their influence has reached other institutions. The focal points of some networks have served to introduce new concepts and methodologies in the field of information, as well as to demonstrate new technologies already in use. The networks also have a decisive role in the organization of national systems and specialized information services in a country. This study also demonstrates that there is a strong exchange between networks, especially during their first stages of existence. However, there is no systematic registration and dissemination of these experiences for the networks operating in the region, which could possibly serve to overcome several problems that generally occur.

4.1 General information on networks operating in Latin America and in the Caribbean

In our study the following networks have been reviewed: BIREME, DOCPAL, REDUC, REPIDISCA, RIALIDE,

RIBLAC, RICORR, RITLA, SIAMAZ and INFOPLAN.

For each of them a short historical presentation will be given, mentioning its aims, products and services, aside from their respective addresses given in Annex 1.

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN INFORMATION CENTRE FOR HEALTH SCIENCES [CENTRO LATINOAMERICANO Y DEL CARIBE DE INFORMACIÓN EN CIENCIAS DE LA SALUD (BIREME)]

The Latin American and Caribbean Information Centre for Health Sciences, formerly called Regional Medical Library [Biblioteca Regional de Medicina (BIREME)], was one of the first networks in the region. It was founded in 1967 by means of an agreement between the Pan-American Health Organization [Organización Panamericana de la Salud (OPS)] and the Brazilian Government.

Its purpose is to establish a regional Information and Documentation System in Health Sciences, and its structure is that of a cooperative network designed to meet the information requirements of health

professionals at any level and in any place wherever they may be.

BIREME is the coordinating centre; its structure reckons with domestic co-ordinating centres, an advisers' committee and technical staff.

During its first years, it functioned as co-ordinating and centralizing unit for activities and services, facilitating access to international biomedical literature, especially to texts issued in Latin America and in the Caribbean, and giving training to the participants of the system. Among its responsibilities it also had to create a Latin American data base and to process all the literature to be integrated into the system, later it changed to decentralized co-ordination, allocating specific and precise responsibilities to the participating institutions.

In Brazil, its national co-ordinator, it has 298 libraries, 30 cooperators, 15 collaborators and other participants.

To become a participating unit, the basic requirements are as follows: a microcomputer, a CD-ROM reader and a printer; and for teleprocessing: a modem and a facsimile. Having a modular structure gives the Library the opportunity of developing further inside the network.

It is responsible for supplying information in the fields of human, environmental and public health, nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, environmental contamination and food supplies.

Among its services stand out bibliographical research according to the Medline and LILACs system, bibliographical exchange and Selective Dissemination of Information (LACRIP).

It is responsible for creating the data base LILACs, which includes literature concerning health sciences by Latin American and Caribbean authors since 1980, and publishes the Index Medicus Latinoamericano (IMLA), which includes 150 Latin American periodicals.

DOCUMENTATION SYSTEM ON POPULATION IN LATINAMERICA [SISTEMA DE DOCUMENTACIÓN SOBRE POBLACIÓN EN AMERICA LATINA (DOCPAL)]

It was founded in 1976 by the Latin American Demography Centre [Centro Latinoamericano de Demografia (CELADE)] from the CEPAL System of the United Nations with the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) [Centro Internacional de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo (CIID)] in Canada. It has

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been maintained by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities [Fondo de Naciones Unidas para Actividades de Población (FNUAP)] and by CEPAL.

Its objective is to improve the flow of information about population in Latin America and in the Caribbean, to organize and disseminate the documents produces in the region, especially those having significance for its economic and social development. It maintains a bibliographical data base and makes contributions to the collection of the CELADE Library, assembling information related to this subject matter.

Information that comprise this network refer to population in general, to geographical distribution, migration, fertility and mortality, marriages and family.

Among its products and services, besides the data base initially constitutes by the CELADE Library collection with some editions recorded on CD-ROM together with LILACs, it also publishes "DOCPAL: Summaries about population in Latin America, bibliographical research and bibliographical exchange service".

INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION NETWORK ON EDUCATION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
[RED DE INFORMACIÓN Y DOCUMENTACIÓN EN AMERICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE (REDUC)]

REDUC grew out of the necessity of professionals in the field of education to have access to literature related to their areas of activity produced in Latin America and in the Caribbean.

The main goal of this network is to identify, assemble, summarize, divulge and disseminate documents produced in the field of education in the region.

REDUC is a cooperative, decentralizes network constituted by a coordinating centre, and special and national centres - a total of 23 centre at present Studies are being made in order to transform it into a Non-Governmental Information Organization (ONGI), so as to obtain more funds for its development. Brazil participates in this network through Carlos Chagas Foundation with 80% of the literature on education produced in the region.

The products and services offered by this network are analytical summaries [Resúmenes Analíticos de Educación (RAE)], in national and Latin America editions, RAE indexes, microfiches carrying the complete

text of documents, data base in CD-ROM to be issued together with LILACs, national and subject matter bibliographies, seminars and so forth.

PAN-AMERICAN INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION NETWORK IN SANITARY ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES [RED PANAMERICANA DE INFORMACIÓN Y DOCUMENTACIÓN EN INGENIERIA SANITARIA Y CIENCIAS DEL AMBIENTE (REPIDISCA)]

The network started functioning in 1981 and was co-ordinated by the Regional OPS Centre, Pan-American Centre of Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences [Centro Panamericano de Ingenieria Sanitaria y Ciencias de Ambiente (CEPIS)], with its headquarters in Lima, Peru, and by the International Development Reasearch Centre (IRDC) in Canada.

The purpose for establishin this network was to develop an infrastructure so as to facilitate access to information and documents generated inside specialized institutions in the field of sanitary engineering and envioronmental sciences, as well as to maintain exchange with the cooperating centres in Latin America and in the Caribbean. The network has a

coordination and exchange centre, a library, performs information analyses and has a data base on CD-ROM, published together with LILACs data base (BIREME).

The document funds receive contributions from 300 regional institutions; only in Brazil there are 31 such cooperating centres. The network is decentralized, in eacht country there is co-ordinating unit and several cooperating centres. Brazil, due to its territorial magnitude, owns two co-ordinating centres: one for the southern region, with headquarters at the Technology and Basic Sanitation Company [Companhia de Tecnologia e Saneamento Básico (CETESB)], in São Paulo, another in Brasília, FD, with headquarters at the Brazilian Institute for hte Environment [Instituto Brasileiro do Meio-Ambiente (IBAMA)], for the rest of the country. The network has approximately 27 000 documents and an annual increment of 3.000. Among its services and products, there are such publication as REPINDEX (Bibliography), TABACONT, Thesaurus of Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences, general catalogue, catalogue of the CEPIS Library and CD-ROM containing a data base and manuals; assistance is given to companies that integrate the network concerning organization and automation of their libraries; bibliographical surveys and reproduction of documents are performed.

INFORMATION NETWORKS OF THE LATIN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS
[REDES DE INFORMACIÓN DE ASSOCIACIÓN LATINOAMERICANA DE INSTITUICIONES FINANCIERAS DE DESARROLLO (RIALIDE)]

RIALIDE was founded by the Latin American Association of Financial Development Institutions [Associación Latinoamricana de Instituiciones Financieras de Desarrollo (ALIDE)], in order to the the information requirements of financial development institutions in Latin America. It is formed by part of the main libraries and documentation centre of ALIDE member institutions.

The main goal of the network is to strengthen cooperation, operative and technical capacity of the participating libraries and thus make accessible financial and related information to its users to provide support for decisions, studies and research.

To fulfil the goals of the network, three projects have been developed in 1991: Consolidation and co-ordination of ALIDE Information Network, Consolidation of ALIDE Documentation Centre and Qualification in Technical Assistance for the Information Units of the Financial Development Institutions.

The network has a co-ordinating unit and

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national centres with mini-networks. It supplies bibliographical, statistical and legal information concerning capital investment in projects. It reckons with bibliographical data base in legislation and projects in development and financing sources, aside from services in Financial and Technological Information about Projects and Investments [Información Financiera y Tecnológica sobre Proyectos y Inversiones (SIFT)], available upon request.

INFORMATION NETWORK IN BIOSCIENCES FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
[RED DE INFORMACIÓN EN BIOCIENCIAS PARA LATINOAMERICA Y EL CARIBE (RIBLAC)]

RIBLAC was developed with the aid of the General Information Program (GIP) of UNESCO, in order to foster cooperation among institutions specializes in biosciences in Latin America and in the Caribbean.

It is a referential information network and covers the fields of general and molecular biology, biotechnology, biomedicine and related subjects. Its data base has been built with the information supplied by the network participants and it provides information

on biosciences, projects in progress, institutions and events related to this field.

The Regional Co-ordinating Centre has its headquarters at the Venezuelan Scientific Reasearch Institute [Instiuto Venezoelano de Investigaciones Cientificas (IVIC)], in Caracas, Venezuela.

In a meeting that took place in Venezuela in April 1992 the following recommendations have been made: dissemination of information will be processed semi-annually through remittance of disks; the Regional Centre should generate, as a by-product, a bilingual Portuguese - Spanish dictionary having as starting point information generated in Brazil; electronic remittance will be used for any kind of communication; the RIBLAC Bulletin should have informative content.

IBERO-AMERICAN NETWORK OF TECHNOLOGICAL INFORMATION ON CORROSION
[REDE IBERO-AMERICANA DE INFORMAÇÃO TECNOLÓGICA SOBRE CORROSÃO (RICORR)]

The network was created at meetings that took place in Medelin, Colombia, in 1991, where the following countries participated: Argentina, Brazil, Colonbia,

Spain, Mexico, Peru, Portugal and Venezuela.

RICORR integrates the XV Corrosion Sub-program / Environmental Impact on Materials and the Ibero-American Program of Science and Technology for Development. The objective of the network is to establish and turn operative an Ibero - American Technological Information Network on Corrosion, with special emphasis on diffusion of information related to corrosion, anti-corrosion protection and available technology. The network should be structured so as to strengthten the technological capacity of the participating countries, stimulating innovation, supplying and facilitating the use of information especially to small and medium sized companies.

The methods and procedures for RICORR will be established and it will render efficient service analysing and evaluating information in easy language for the user; the network will contribute to disseminate information and therefore these guides should contain: titles of specialized periodicals in the field published in the network member coutries, research centres on corrosion, consulting firms, qualification and specialization courses, information and documentation centre functioning in the member countries and national technical standards in the field of corrosion and

protection set up by the coutries participating in the network.

The compilation of information for the Guide will be performed by the representatives of the Network in each coutry and will be co-ordinated by Brazilian representatives, who will be in charge of editing and publishing.

Diffusion Brochures will present basic inforation on corrosion and protection against corrosion in straightforward style to be easily understood by non-specialists in the field.

The activities foreseen for the second year are as follows: preparation of a technical glossary, audio-visual diffusion devices, bulletin and implementation of a data base which will contain Ibero - American production in the field.

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LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK OF TECHNOLOGICAL INFORMATION [REDE DE INFORMAÇÃO TECNOLÓGICA LATINO-AMERICANA (RITLA)]

The RITLA executive committee was created in 1983 according to a decision of the Latin American Counsel of the Latin America Econimic System [Sistema Econômico Latino Americano (SELA)] which, in compliance with a Brazilian request, designated the country as headquarters and holder of the Office of the organization. The above mentioned committee was installed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In 1990, by means of an edict of the Brazilian government, RITLA was formally established in Brazilian territory.

Besides Brazil, the following coutries constitute the network: Argentina, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

The main objectives of RITLA are:

a) To support the development ofinfrastructures, technological information systems for the member coutries and to promote their full utilization by governmental and private circles;

b) To foster permanent co-ordination and cooperation so that the exchange of technological information takes place in accordance with the requirements of the participating coutries;

c) To consolidate national and regional competence in generating their own technologies;

d) To support and improve the ability of member countries in search for, negotiation, evaluation, adaptation and employment of imported types of technology;

e) To stimulate the formation and qualification of the human resources requires for the technological development of the member countries;

f) To promote exchange of technico - economical information in order to strengthen the link between supply and demand of regioal technology;

g) To foment technological cooperation among member countries by means of diffusion of existing opportunities and other activities which respond to the problems and challenges arising from regional cooperation;

h) To establish operative connections with other international, regional or sub - regional technological information systems or networks. In order to avoid improductive superpositions RITLA will be integrated with the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development [Conselho Nacional do Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPQ)], through the National Research Network [Rede Nacional de Pesquisa (RNP)], a project developed by the National Council which will allow an otimization in the transmission of data for researchers and research institutions, ensuring compatibility of technological solutions, efficiency in the network connections, and conditions for dissemination of electronical networks

for data transmission in the States and regions of the coutry.

Arrangements are being made with the Brazilian Institute of Scientific Technological Information [Instituto Brasileiro de Informacão Cientifica e Tecnológica (IBICT)], so that the Institute can provide technical support for the utilization of the network as a means of systematizing contacts between the so called Brazilian "Nuclei of Technological Information" located in Brazil in the sphere of the Project for Scientific a nd Technological Development [Plano para o Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (PADCT)], receiving financial support from the Wold Bank.

On the other hand, UNIDO has communicated that it intends to seek good interaction between its Data Bank in Industrial Technology and RITLA, in concrete activities arising in regional and sub - regional integration.

AMAZONIAN INFORMATION SYSTEM
[SISTEMA DE INFORMAÇÃO DA AMAZONIA (SIAMAZ)]

The idea of an Information System in the Amazonia Region originated in the recommendations of the

First Scientific and Technological Meeting of the coutries which signed the Amazonia Cooperation Treaty [Tratado de Cooperação Amazônica (TCA)] in 1924, namely: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Equador, Guiana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela.

In 1988, during the International Seminar on Amazonian Scientific, Technological and Cultural Information and Documentation, which took place in Iquitos, Peru, a proposal was made for the institucionalization of the Amazonia Information System [Sistema de Informação da Amazônia (SIAMAZ)], which occurred in 1990.

This system is a fundamental instrument for efficient Pan - Amazonia cooperation in collecting, processing, recuperating and disseminating scientific, technological and cultural information of the region, interconnecting the member institutions of the Association of Amazonia Universities [Associação de Universidade Amazônicas (UNAMAZ)], a computor interconnected information network. The SIAMAZ is being installed regionally through National Co-ordinating Centres.

This is a decentralized network and each country has a national co-ordinating centre which is reponsible for the operationality of its network, that

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i s, for collecting and processing the information generated inside its borders and for incoporating same into the System. It is also responsible for the diffusion of available national and regional information. This exchange of regionaldata is to be accomplished by means of data base in CD-ROM, distributed to each member of the network.

Among the services and products of automatized information there is a data base containing bibliographical references, referential information (institutions, experts and researchers, research and development studies, later on yearbooks and prognoses), factual information and information on legislation related to the Amazonia Region; alerting services, bibliographical exchange services, analytical summaries, directories of institutions and experts, events calendar, publications in CD-ROM of research texts on the Amazonian Region.

Through the Federal University of Pará, Brazil is, at present, the Regional Co-ordinating Centre of the SIAMAZ.

INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR PLANNING IN LATIN AMERICA AND IN THE CARIBBEAN

[SISTEMA DE INFORMACIÓN PARA LA PLANIFICACIÓN EN AMERICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE (INFOPLAN)]

The INFOPLAN system was fouded in 1979 by the Economical Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean [Comissión Económica para America Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)], which belongs to the Latin American Centre of Economic and Social Documentation [Centro Latino - Americano de Doumentación Económica y Social (CEPAL)] and the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning [Instituto Latino - Americano e do Caribe de Planejamento Econômico e Social (IPLES)], with the financial aidof the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) having in view the information requirements for planning the economic and social development of Latin America and of the Caribbean.

The INFOPLAN is responsible for bibliographical coordination and cooperation among underdeveloped countries, controlling, analysing and disseminating information generted by these countries. The system consists of a regional decentralized network formed by participating and cooperativa centre, co-ordinated regionally, sub - regionally and nationally.

The system covers all the documentation generated in Latin America and in the Caribbean written in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish, related to socioeconomic planning, global, regional and local programs and projects.

The INFOPLAN system is the most important project of CLADES and functions as general co-ordinator of studies and researches about the most efficient documentation techniques, provides technical assistance a nd promotes qualification courses to enable the personnel to operate the system on regional and national levels.

Among products and sevices of INFOPLAN are found:

a) Publications - EL PLANINDEX, Regional, the first INFOPLAN product, National PLANINDEX, INFOPLAN Series and INFOPLAN Bulletin.

b) Sevices - Bibliographical research, data base consultation service, reference services, doument distriution service.

In the future, the INFOPLAN system shall undergo changes in its scope of activity, enabling its continuity inside the organizations.

5. CONCLUSION.

It becomes clear in this study that the networks are quite similar: a data base and a bibliography or a specialized index which recompiles the information generated in the region at pre-determined regular intervals.

One has to emphasize that, in general, the goals and guidelines of the existing networks have almost always been based on international, national or regional networks that succeded.

After analysing several aspects of this study, we come to the conclusion that information networks or systems can be set up and successfully used in institutions. However, to implement, operate and maintain them we should take into account aspects such as infrastructure, human and technological factors which have been responsible for their success or failure. Therefore, some basic steps should be observed such as establishing a policy, determining the resources to be employed and the costs involved in each case.

If on the one hands there is great motivation for implementing networks in Latin America and in the Caribbean due to the similarity in the requirements of these countries, theses networks are often doomed to cease operation because of the political and economical instability in the member countries, which prevent that goals be fully achieved unless the networks can rely on substantial support from a Regional or International Organization.

And finally we would like to stress the necessity for the networks to undertake enlightening and public campaigns aimed at the government, institutions and users, focusing on the mutual benefits that may be gained from networking such as resource sharing, mastering a great number of informative materials and offering services at lower costs.

A N N E X

ADDRESSES OF THE COORDENATOR CENTERS

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LISTON JR, M & SCHOENE, M.L. - Basic elements of planing and design of national and regional information siptens Washington, D.C., OEA, 1971. 39 p.

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